FOCUS ON

JACK COLE

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FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

-JACK COLE-

FOCUS ON
JACK COLE

© 1955 Playboy

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TO DON AND MAGGIE, WHO PUBLISHED MY FIRST WORK IN THIS AREA BACK IN MIMEOGRAPH DAYS.

Quite a few people have helped me by providing information and material of various kinds. They are Orlando Busino, Jerry DeFuccio, Will Eisner, Creig Flessel, Gill Fox, Alex Kotzky, Hobart MacQuarrie, Dorothy Portugais, Ray Russell and Craig Yoe. Were I Plastic Man I could shake all their hands at once.

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FOCUS ON

JACK COLE

by RON GOULART

WOOZY WINKS: Is this JACK COLE, the cartoonist who draws the adventures of my friend, PLASTIC MAN? Listen . . . I've got a job for you.
JACK COLE: Suh-sorry, Winks . . . I already guh-got a job! Wh-wh-why I earn MILLIONS . . .
WOOZY: I'll give you a buck———CASH!
COLE: CASH?!!! Wh-wh-what's y-yuh-your p-p-p-p-p-p-p-proposition?

—Jack Cole,
Police Comics #20,
July, 1943

"Too bad about Bob Wood. Wonder what kind of childhood the poor devil had to twist him like that. Then lotta folks wonder what kind of childhood I had."

—JACK COLE

Jack Cole was born in 1914 and killed himself in 1958, four months shy of his 44th birthday. In the spring of 1958, already the star gag cartoonist of the increasingly successful *Playboy*, Cole sold a comic strip to the Chicago Sun-Times Syndicate. Titled *Betsy and Me*, it dealt with Chester B. Tibbit, a not too bright floorwalker, his wife Betsy and their five year old genius son Farley. Cole provided some third person autobiography to be sent out with the syndicate publicity on his new strip. He said:

> *The artist's life --- (it's not yet completed). Jack Cole was born in 1914 in New Castle, Pa. At 15, he took the Landon School of Cartooning mail correspondence course. Highlights of his career thus far are: 1932, a 7,000 mile bicycle trip to California and return. 1933, graduated from high school. 1934, married Dorothy Mahoney. 1934, got a job at American Can Factory and started mailing out cartoons to magazines. 1935, first sale to* Boy's Life. *1936, quit factory, borrowed $500 in small amounts from home town merchants and set out with his wife for New York to find cartoon work. 1937-'54, worked for comic magazines. 1954, freelance cartooning. 1955, lost nearly all of his furniture and belongings in the New England floods. 1958, 43 years old, 24 years married, no Farleys of his own, now lives in Cary, Ill. Dot's hobby: the electric organ. His: listening to the electric organ.*

This book is an attempt to flesh out that terse outline of Cole's relatively brief life, especially with regard to his 17 years in comics. It's not about why he committed suicide, though it may provide some clues, but about what he accomplished as an artist and writer, and about what sort of a man he was. He began working in comic books in the early years of what is now called the Golden Age and he's often referred to, both by fans and by his contemporaries, as a genius. And if such a lowly field as comics can have geniuses, Cole certainly was one.

His best-known creation is Plastic Man. The flexible redclad crimebuster is one of the handful

Police Comics #20, July 1943.

HHU-HU HOW'S THIS?
I CAN'T PAY YOU FOR SUCH A PUNK JOB!
TERRIBLE! THEY COULDN'T LOOK LIKE THAT! WHY, THAT LOOKS MORE LIKE THE TWO NICE MEN I BUMPED INTO THAN A PAIR OF CROOKS!
AW, GEE, Y-Y-Y-Y-YOU AIN'T F-F-F F-FAIR!
TELL YOU WHAT... I WON'T PAY YOU, BUT I'LL GIVE YOU A PLOT FOR YOUR NEXT STORY!

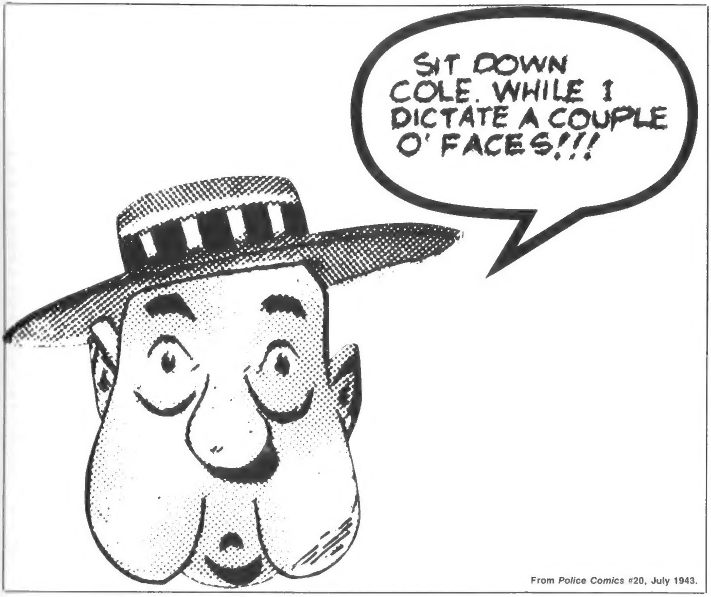
Woozy Winks gives an artist a hard time—the artist being Jack Cole himself (from *Police Comics* #20, July 1943). Cole's self-portraits were never flattering. For this sequence he endowed himself with a stutter he didn't, in real life, possess.

of heroes to have survived from the heyday of comic books, but he was never the media and merchandising hit that Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman are. That's Jack Cole's fault, since his quirky style and personality were essential to Plastic Man's complete success. The basic notion of a pliable hero who can assume any shape is a strong and appealing one, but nobody's ever been able to do it the way Jack Cole did.

"Cole began working in comic books in the early years of what is now called the Golden Age, and he's often referred to, by both fans and by his contemporaries, as a genius. And if such a lowly field as comics can have geniuses, Cole was certainly one."

John Ralph Cole was born on Monday, December 14, 1914, in New Castle, Pennsylvania. This is coal mining and steel mill country, "an industrial and railroad center darkened by soot and smoke." The WPA Guide to the state described the New Castle area as "a rugged region, scarred in part by intensive industrial development." In Cole's youth there were woodlands thick with pine, maple, and spruce as well as railroad tracks, smokestacks, and coal storage bins. Talking about his family several decades later, he mentioned that, "My sisters to this very day have to sneak cigarettes behind Pop's back. He doesn't even know they smoke yet. Otherwise, he's a good egg, though." His father was in the drygoods business, his mother a onetime school teacher. According to the account of Cole's life in Steranko's *History of Comics*, based in part on material provided by Cole's younger brother Dick, their father was a gregarious, outgoing man. "Though he never made his living as a professional, Delace Cole was a born showman, a song-and-dance man of the old school, a trooper who was constantly organizing charity drive shows and performances for veterans."

Unlike his extrovert father, Jack Cole seems to have been a shy kid. When he caricatured himself in a 1943 Plastic Man adventure, he appeared as a lean, sharpnosed chap suffering with a stammer that was so bad it even caused him to stutter when he wrote. None of the people I've talked to who knew Cole as an adult can recall even a trace of stuttering. One of his syndicate editors, though, said he told her he'd stuttered as a child and had cured himself of it. Young Cole liked to tinker and invent things; once he even worked out a way to tap into the family telephone so he could eavesdrop on other members' conversations. He was also an enthusiastic silent movie goer and, quite early in life, had discovered the funny papers. He enjoyed looking at them, reading them and, more importantly, copying them. By the time he'd reached his early teens he was certain he wanted to be cartoonist.



From *Police Comics* #20, July 1943.

The Landon School was one of the leading mail-order cartooning schools in the 1920s. Founded and operated by C.N. Landon, veteran cartoonist and Art Editor of the NEA Syndicate, it offered those who received its instructions by correspondence "the Landon Picture Chart Method of teaching ORIGINAL DRAWING." This "explains the fundamental principles of construction so fully and clearly that *ability to do original work develops quickly.* Further, Landon provided Personal Criticisms, "thorough instructions on originating and developing all types of CARTOON IDEAS" and "complete instructions on the BUSINESS SIDE of cartooning." Among the correspondence school's dozens of successful grads were Roy Crane, Milton Caniff, and Noel Sickles.

When Cole encountered the Landon ads, which ran in the back pages of both slick and pulp magazines, he knew he had to enroll. His father, however, didn't agree and wouldn't advance the relatively modest fee needed. Undaunted, the teenage Cole, as had done many a determined lad before him, began borrowing from his own lunch money and stashing it away. When he had enough, he sent off to Cleveland, Ohio for the course.

His drawing at the time was a bit stiff and awkward, yet showed considerable natural ability. He stuck with the course, diligently tackling each lesson assignment, be it "Symbolic Figures," "Caricature," or "Foreshortening." His mail-order instructor encouraged him with pencilled comments like "very good" and "good work, Jack." Then he'd add a "but" and go on to explain in words and pictures how to improve.

Cole's ambition was to sell his drawings to magazines like *Judge* and *Life*, maybe do a newspaper strip as well. The same year Cole enrolled in the Landon School, 1929, George Delacorte launched a tabloid size comic book back in New York. *The Funnies*, which contained all original material, was a failure, but it paved the way for other magazines to come. By the time the ambitious young Jack Cole arrived in Manhattan in the middle 1930s the comic book business was well established and about to start growing.

2

From *Police Comics* #20, July, 1943.

Viewed from a biographer's distance, a goo deal of Jack Cole's youth and early manhoo looks like the standard stuff of rags to riche sagas, the scenario for a sentimental Frank Capr comedy about the upright, goodhearted hick wh journeys to the wicked big city, outsmarts th slickers, and confirms the faith he's had i himself. Barely out of his teens, Cole eloped wit Dot Mahoney, a pretty girl he'd idolized fro boyhood. After two unsatisfying years trying t fit in as a factory worker he quit. Borrowing $50 from merchants and friends in New Castle, Col took his wife to New York City where he was dete mined to establish himself as a fulltime, sel supporting cartoonist. It's an oftmade pilgrim age and the majority of those who try it end u after varying periods of encountering nothin but shut doors and blank walls, lowering the sights or even slinking back to the old hometow Cole held on, though, and he succeeded. The fie that brought him his first fame and financi reward as a cartoonist was one that had scarce existed when he'd sent his hard-won fee to C. Landon.

By the middle 1930s, though, there was comic-book industry in America. Small and shak it was, and still a way from being big busines but a comic-book industry all the same. *Famou Funnies*, the first newsstand comic in what was be the standard format, went on sale in 1934 a in the following year the dapper Major Malcol Wheeler-Nicholson brought out his first two titl containing original material, *New Fun* and *Ne* Late in the same year Delacorte introduce *Popular Comics* (cover dated February 1936), reprint title to compete with *Famous Funnie* Over the next two years other new titles, bo reprint and original came along. Some were pu lished by hole-in-the-wall outfits, others by t well-funded newspaper syndicates. On the mag zine racks you could now find, besides the titl already mentioned, *King Comics*, *Tip Top Comic The Funnies* (a new Dell magazine with the o title), *Wow*, *Funny Pages*, and *Funny Pictu Stories*.

As comic books proliferated, so did the d mand for material. Virtually all the newspap strips worth reprinting, from *Joe Palooka* to *Fla Gordon*, were sewed up. That meant origin features were needed to fill the pages. Maj Nicholson had taken that approach from t start, hiring art school students, pulp illustr tors, and down on their luck newspaper cartoo ists to produce the eclectic contents of his *Ne Fun*, *New Adventure*, etc. Hiring may not be t

[illegible] would to describe the Major's method of dealing with artists, since he often never got around to paying the $3 to $5 per page he'd promised. Among those who worked for him in those early days were Creig Flessel, Lyman Anderson, Leo [illegible] Tom McNamara, and Sheldon Mayer. Some contributors worked entirely through the mail, which was how Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, two Cleveland young men, did it. They turned out *Federal Men*, *Dr. Occult*, *Spy*, and *Slam Bradley* for Nicholson's magazines, but never succeeded in interesting him in their favorite character, Superman.

Now that there was a comic-book business a new profession came into being. The trouble was that there still weren't enough comic book artists around. To save the publishers the trouble of beating the bush for artists, or the strain of recycling old newspaper cartoonists, a few entrepreneurs set up shops to provide the needed artwork. A pioneer in this area was a man calling himself Harry "A" Chesler. Not an artist or writer himself, the enterprising Chesler concentrated on recruiting artists and writers and packaging comic books for an increasing number of clients. Will Fox, one of the early young aspiring cartoonists to respond to Chesler's newspaper ads calling for artists, recalls that Chesler looked to him more like a race track tout or fight manager than an artists' representative. He went in for checkered vests, cheap cigars, and a derby worn on the back of his head.

While Chesler was setting up his comic art sweat shop at 276 Fifth Avenue, Jack Cole had moved East and settled in for his attack on the gag cartoon markets and newspaper syndicates of Manhattan. Operating out of the far-from-luxurious apartment he and his wife had taken at 309 West 14th Street, Cole started making the rounds. The gag cartoons he was trying to peddle were not exactly subtle, his drawing style at the time had none of the snap and flow it took on a few years later. He'd worked up an elaborate way of signing his name, with each letter somewhat resembling pieces of a Tinker Toy set, and his artwork belonged to the goofy-school being championed at the time by such successful magazine cartoonists as Bill Holman and Dr. Seuss. Cole made few sales, none to any of the better paying markets. Although often shy with strangers, Cole was usually in an up mood with family and friends. His younger brother Dick, who visited him during the summer in those early years, rarely found him gloomy or downcast. "Jack was moody and temperamental at times, but usually he had a smile on his face and was cracking jokes."

About a year or so after arriving in Manhattan Cole heard about the Chesler shop. Dropping in on the flashy packager, he showed his samples. He was hired, at a salary in the neighborhood of 20 bucks a week, and assigned a drawing board. He wouldn't be able to work at home any more, meaning he'd be spending less time with Dot, but he was at last going to be earning a regular living as a cartoonist. Twenty dollars sounds like next to nothing these days, but at the tail-end of the Depression Cole's salary with Chesler was probably as good or better than what he'd been pulling down at the American Can plant back home. And now he was making the money by drawing.

It took Plastic Man a few months to shed his alter ego, the wanted fugitive Eel O'Brien. In this panel (from *Police Comics*#2, September 1941), Eel proves himself to be slippery indeed.

3

The Chesler shop was a seedbed for the comic-book business and the artists and writers who worked there went on to jobs with most of the other publishers of the late 1930s and early 1940s. On staff at about the same time that Cole signed on were Jack Binder, Charles Biro, Bob Wood, Mort Meskin, Fred Guardineer, Irving Novick, Fred Schwab, and Gill Fox. A local boy and year younger than Cole, Fox had also taken the Landon correspondence course in his youth. He and Cole, building on the bond of both being Landon alums, became friends.

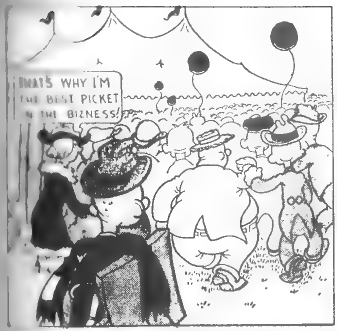
Remembering back, Fox told me that when Cole first came into the sweat shop he was fresh from Pennsylvania, a tall lanky fellow of about 18. This indicates that Cole, who was in his 20s and had been in Manhattan for over a year, looked younger and more innocent than he actually was. "Chesler had space in a big office building on Fifth Avenue," Fox recalls, "down around 29th Street. Cole worked there in the studio with us. There were three aisles of drawing boards, two aisles going between them. Jack . . . I'm trying to remember where Jack sat on the left side . . . He sat near Schwab in the back . . . I was on the right side."

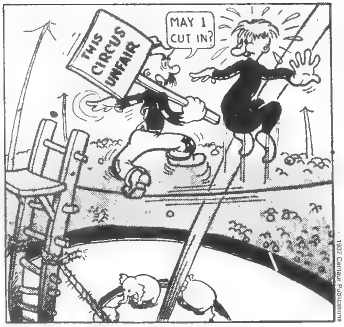
Although Cole's debut in comic books was not a particularly auspicious one, there were hints in his maiden efforts of better things to come. His earliest work, which began to appear in magazines like *Funny Pages* and *Funny Picture Stories* late in 1937, consisted of one page humor fillers. These funny pages, featuring characters such as Insurance Ike and Joe Ticket (a picket by trade), were in the *Smoky Stover-Salesman Sam* vein. Not content to rely on the final punchline for laughs, Cole, with the exuberance of youth, jammed his panels with funny signs, oddball people, even silly furniture. Most of his performers had rubbery figures capable of all sorts of elongations and contortions. Big noses, buck teeth, and facial hair abounded. There was considerable action and Cole was already starting to fool around with exaggerated perspective. The work looks like that of fairly gifted Landon graduate who'd been seeing a lot of cartoons. While the influence of animated cartoons is obvious, you can also see that Cole hadn't yet learned to make his figures move smoothly. From the start he was able to tell his one page stories interestingly and eventually he discovered how to tell them logically.

Among the other features he drew for various Chesler and Centaur comic books were *Cheerio Minstrels*, *Smart Alec*, *Ima Sphinx*, and *Slim Pickens*. He was also allowed, which must've

From *Funny Picture Stories* #11, October 1937.

1937 Centaur Publications





When Cole was with the Harry "A" Chesler shop, he was still experimenting. These panels, from *Funny Picture Stories* #17, indicate that Cole was trying out some tricks borrowed from animated cartoons, combining the simplicity of an animation cel with the comic exaggeration of a cartoon.

cajoled him, to do an occasional page made up of four or five gag cartoons. Hillbillies and other rustic types were big in the '30s. You found them in Broadway plays like *Tobacco Road* and in comic strips like *Li'l Abner* and *Barney Google*. Becoming enamored of them, Cole turned out a four page feature called "Home In The Ozarks" for *Star Ranger Funnies*. Not exactly highbrow material, the strip made use of moonshiners, feuding, child brides, laziness, and all the other standard fixtures. Cole loosened up on these hillbilly pages, concentrating more on telling his story and less on getting an extra laugh in every panel.

In the spring of 1938 Cole came to the notice of Monte Bourjaily, who'd been comics editor at United Feature Syndicate. Bourjaily, the man responsible for signing up Al Capp's impressively successful *Li'l Abner* a few years earlier, had in mind a new syndicate of his own. To introduce his news strips he intended to showcase them first in a monthly comic book. The other artists tapped to appear in *Circus* included Basil Wolverton, Bob Kane, and Will Eisner. Bourjaily was offering such unprecedented things as a $25 page rate and a royalty based on circulation. Optimistic, Cole wrote to his parents back home to tell them that, "This New York venture turned out to be the best possible thing that could have happened to us."

He went on to say:

> *It would have been impossible to do as much as we have if it hadn't been for MR. & MRS. Cole. I know darn well that it wasn't so much my work that prompted New Castle people to lend us the money to finance this venture, as it was the sterling character of you two. The money was loaned to me with your respected straightforwardness as collateral. . . . Have tried to do things as you would do them, but unfortunately I am ruled by my heart rather than by my head, and sometimes slip up. I have never told you this before, but in case you are interested, I have never taken a drink of beer or liquor yet and never mean to—cuss some but never use His name in vain—please don't think I'm bragging—I merely want you to know that these things are what they are because of your influence through 22 years, pounding into the old noggin what is right and vice versa—which adding all in all, makes yours truly mighty glad the stork didn't drop him down someone else's chimney.*

"Had Cole's humor strip become a national newspaper hit, he might never have tried his hand at an adventure story for comic books."

Unfortunately, Bourjaily's entire venture went bust. *Circus* folded after three issues and Cole's *Peewee Throttle* strip never reached the newspapers or much of an audience at all. Had his humor strip become a national newspaper hit, he might never have tried his hand at an adventure story for comic books.

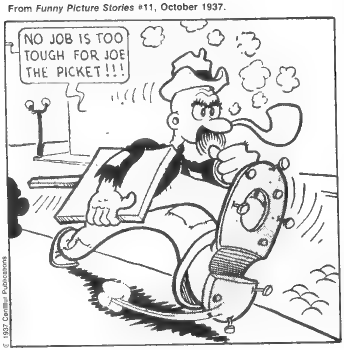
4

Jack Cole's published first adventure feature was "Little Dynamite," which appeared in the sixth issue of Centaur's *Keen Detective Funnies* (February 1939). Ben Trumpson, better known as Little Dynamite, is a diminutive uniformed cop. In this, his only case, he rounds up a gang of ruthless car thieves. Being a half-pint, Ben is able to hide in the trunk of a car that is snatched by the crooks. Cole obviously worked hard on this six page story and the panels are rich with shading, crosshatching, and other time-consuming noodling. His inking is thick-lined and cautious. Though his figure work and some of his perspective is shaky, he is already making use of odd-angle shots and dramatic closeups. His straight style still has a good deal of the bigfoot approach in it, but his work has a freshness and an individuality that makes it stand out from the more pedestrian stuff that fills the rest of the magazine.

Nineteen thirty-nine was the year Cole began to branch out and attempt more straight features. Superman had come along in *Action Comics* the year before, followed by Batman in *Detective Comics* in the spring of that year. Their rapid and conspicuous success convinced publishers that action and fantasy sold much better than funny stuff and whimsy. Comic books were proving to be a special field — what worked in newspaper strips or in pulp magazines wouldn't necessarily work in comics. Cole, still anxious for a secure income, must've realized that if he limited himself to humor the best he could hope for was a couple filler pages per issue in any comic book. Straight men, though, could do stories anywhere from five to 11 pages long; even at $5 to $10 a page you could earn as much as $110 on a single job.

Charles Biro, whose path would cross Cole's at various times in their careers, had also started as a bigfoot man at the Chesler studio. He specialized in pages about cute little blond toddlers who had fantasy fun in Dreamland dressed in their dropseat pajamas. In 1939 he, too, switched and went on to produce some of the bloodiest, most violent stuff in the comics of the early 1940s. What launched Biro into this new phase was a fledgling publishing outfit calling itself MLJ Magazines, Inc. Less formal than MGM, the company took its title from the *first* name initials of its proprietors. They were Morris Coyne, Louis Silberkleit, and John Goldwater. The artwork and scripts for the earliest issues of their new titles were provided by the Chesler shop. The MLJ magazines were *Blue Ribbon*, *Top-Notch*, *Pep*, and *Zip* and their initial contents were an uncertain

From *Funny Picture Stories* #11, October 1937.



© 1937 Centaur Publications

lack of fresh material and what looked to be old items out of Chesler's trunk. Morris, Louis, and John came to their senses fairly soon. They dumped Chesler and hired some of the better people from his shop to work directly for them. Busy was put in charge. Cole was one of those who brightened those early MLJ books, but I'm not certain whether he did the work before or after leaving Chesler. Leave he did, though, and by late 1939 he was freelancing in the burgeoning funny-book field.

Cole wrote and drew true crime strips for two of the MLJ magazines. In *Blue Ribbon* #1 and #3 he had "Crime On The Run" and for the first three issues of Top-Notch he did "Manhunters." These lively true stories of crime" were obviously inspired by the *Gang Busters* radio show. Cole's drawing is much more sure and effective on them than it was on "Little Dynamite." And, unlike many of his 1930s contemporaries, he'd already discovered that a comic book page wasn't a newspaper strip. He designed imaginative splash panels broke up each page into unconventional sizes and shapes to tell his stories. A good many of the page layouts in the early comic books, inspired by the shrunk-down Sunday pages in *Famous Funnies* and *Popular Comics*, had a conventional 1-2-3 format. Usually they were about as visually interesting as a stretch of boarding house wallpaper. Cole was already moving beyond this and also bringing movie techniques, close-ups, downshots, and so on, into his work.

His first costumed super-hero was the Comet, a vindictive fellow who began his violent career in *Pep Comics* #1 (January 1940). *Pep* also introduced Irv Novick's "The Shield" and Biro's "Sergeant Boyle" among several others. Not one of the other new features in the magazine opened as exuberantly as his. Cole's splash panel shows the brightly costumed hero whizzing across the night sky and nearly flying off the page. Cole was also the only one to provide his own blurb — "Smash adventures of the most astonishing man on the Earth." Even in those days, when supermen were starting to proliferate like mushrooms in a damp cellar, the Comet was unusual. For one thing he killed people, lots of them, and usually with glee. That might not seem odd to readers of today's splatter comics, but 40 and more years ago it was.

John Dickering was a young scientist who discovered "a gas that is 50 times lighter than hydrogen." He finds that "by injecting small doses of the gas into his bloodstream, his body becomes light enough to make leaps through the air! Never mind what may happen if a strong wind comes up. Dickering further discovers "that the gas accumulates in the eyes and throws off two powerful beams — these rays, when they cross each other, cause whatever he looks at to disintegrate completely!!!" Glass is the only thing these cross-eyed rays won't penetrate, so young Dickering fashions a glass eye-shield to wear and, while he's at it, a costume as well. The outfit is red, black, and yellow with stars and crescent moons all over the tunic, making him look somewhat like a streamlined Merlin. "Thus is born THE COMET!"

In his first adventure the Comet goes after a gang who are using typhoid germs to run a murder-for-insurance racket. When he catches up with the underlings, he lifts his visor and announces grimly, "PREPARE TO FACE YOUR MAKER!" Then, "amid screams of terror, the cruel murderers melt into nothingness!" Next, the

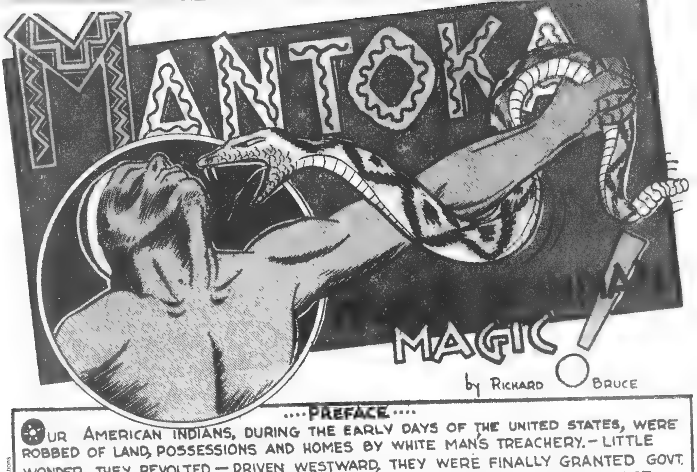
"Cole's Comet was unusual. For one thing, he killed people—lots of them—and usually with glee. That might not seem odd to readers of today's splatter comics, but 40 or more years ago it was."

Comet grabs the Big Boss and flies high above the gentleman's stately suburban home. The villain pleads to be let down and the Comet says, "As you wish, doctor! The world has too many of your kind already!!" and drops him.

Cole produced three more episodes of the Comet saga before going on to other things. In his final sequence Cole, who'd grown up in the mining country of Pennsylvania, had his vindictive hero deal with a crooked mine owner whose workers were being stricken with silicosis because of poor working conditions. The sneaky owner ends up exploding, which shows what happens if you try to toss a stick of dynamite at the Comet. In that distant time before relevance had been invented there were a few comic book heroes who dealt, albeit in vigilante style, with social issues and working class problems. Cole, as we'll see, drew several of them.

About this same time he also cooked up his first shape-changing hero. Named Mantoka, the fellow was a Maker of Indian Magic. The feature appeared but twice, in the January and May 1940 issues of *Funny Pages*. This Centaur magazine was one of the earliest to use original material. Begun in 1936, it had a shifting and unstable cast of characters. While not quite as violent as the Comet, Mantoka still showed Cole's identification with the underprivileged and oppressed. The preface to the initial episode bluntly states, "Our American Indians, during the early days of the United States, were robbed of land, possessions and homes by white man's treachery. . . . They were finally granted govt. protected reservations where they settled, resigned to their fate."

The story begins on contemporary reservation, where Mantoka's medicine man father passes on


MANTOKA
MAGIC!
by RICHARD BRUCE
....PREFACE....
OUR AMERICAN INDIANS, DURING THE EARLY DAYS OF THE UNITED STATES, WERE ROBBED OF LAND, POSSESSIONS AND HOMES BY WHITE MAN'S TREACHERY.— LITTLE WONDER THEY REVOLTED.— DRIVEN WESTWARD, THEY WERE FINALLY GRANTED GOVT. PROTECTED RESERVATIONS WHERE THEY SETTLED, RESIGNED TO THEIR FATE. IT IS ON ONE OF THESE RESERVATIONS THAT WE FIND A SMALL TRIBE LIVING MUCH THE SAME AS THEIR ANCESTORS DID BEFORE THE WHITE INVASION.
1940 Centaur Publications

Cole's first shape-changing hero, Mantoka, showed his identification with the underprivileged and oppressed. (From *Funny Pages* #34, January, 1940.)

"the sacred secrets of magic handed down from our forefathers." These secrets include the ability to transform himself into a huge eagle, to vaporize, and to change his opponents into rats. Mantoka uses his powers to overthrow a dishonest mine owner who's using Indians as forced labor. The fellow meets his finish when the Indian magician causes the earth to open and swallow him. A final caption informs us, "Mantoka leads his people home. The next day vultures can be seen gliding into a newlyformed canyon. Grim testimony of the fate of a cruel man."

In his second, and final, adventure, Mantoka sprouts wings and flies to Alaska to help a tribe whose fishing rights are being usurped by foreign fishermen. He uses his magic to cause storms at sea and rains of fish, finally succeeding in scaring the usurpers off. Cole has the Columbia River running through Alaska, but doesn't make any other slips. "*Mantoka*" was drawn in the same thick-line brush style used on "*The Comet*." The page breakdowns are less imaginative and more sedate, though, and it's possible this work was done earlier and then laid around the Centaur offices for a spell. Cole used the penname Richard Bruce, borrowing the first and middle names of his brother.

A great many titles came and went during the hopeful days of the comic book boom. One such was *Rocket Comics*, which lasted three issues in the spring of 1940. Cole was in the second and third issues with another adventure strip, one in which he again toyed with notions he'd develop more fully with *Plastic Man*. His "The Defender" shared the magazine's 64 pages with such alliterative losers as "Rocket Riley," "Red Roberts," "Hurricane Hart," and "Buzzard Barnes." Unsigned, "The Defender" dealt with a prematurely white-haired crime fighter who'd been disfigured as a child by a racketeer's bomb. To hide h s disfigurement, the Defender invented a plast c mask which he could mold into different shapes. This gave him the ability to change his facial appearance at will." The Defender, real name Robert Larson, worked with a crew of assistants that consisted of a "powerful built sixfooter" named Lucky, and J. Samuel Drew, "a topnotch scientist." This strip offers proof that Cole was a reader of pulp magazines. His Defender was obviously inspired by the Avenger, who had similar attributes, goals, and sidekicks. It's also likely he read the *Doc Savage* pulp as well, since the Man of Bronze and his gang often tackled the same sort of super-science problems Cole's hero went in for.

5

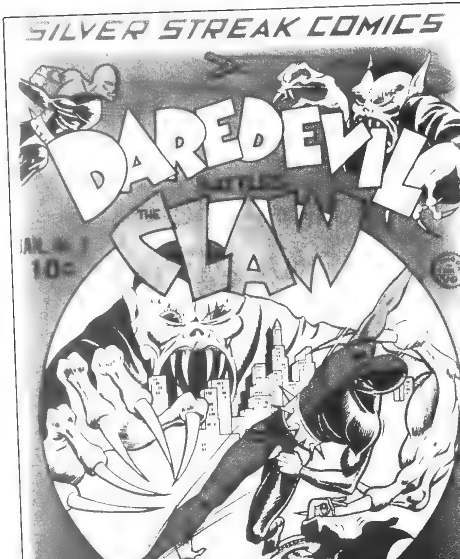
Late in 1939 Jack Cole got a comic book of his own to edit and it seems to have inspired him to do his best and most flamboyant work thus far. The first issue of *Silver Streak Comics* has a cover date of December 1939 and was published by an outfit called Your Guide Publications (which later metamorphosed into Lev Gleason's Comic House, Inc.). *Silver Streak* took off before most of its lead characters were on board, which is probably appropriate for a comic book named after a train. With one exception, none of the characters in the first issue lasted beyond the second. The Silver Streak himself didn't show up until #3 and the leading character in the first half dozen issues was a villain (and even he failed to show up in #s 3, 4, and 5). The character who became the true star of the magazine didn't arrive until #6 and he sort of slipped into the middle of the book without causing much of an initial stir.

It's difficult to be certain after four decades and more, but the early issues of *Silver Streak*, with the exception of Cole's contributions, look to have been put together from leftovers provided by Chesler's art shop and a newer one started by Lloyd Jacquet called Funnies, Inc. How else to account for such non-winners as "The Wasp" by Art Pinajian, "Calling The Duke" by Larry Antonette, and "Red Reeves, Boy Magician" by Harold DeLay? The first two issues of Editor Cole's comic book lead off with his own work, namely The Claw. The quintessential sinister Oriental, the Claw was "a monster of miraculous powers who is out to dominate the universe" and had all the vicious attributes of the better-known Dr. Fu Manchu. What gave him an extra edge, for those of us who doted on his early misdeeds, was the fact that he could grow several stories high at will. Seeing the Claw come swelling up out of a midnight ocean in the path of an unsuspecting ocean liner or watching him squeeze a disloyal minion to death in one huge hand while chuckling, "Die, swine!" were awesome experiences indeed. Completely evil, the Claw lived but to kill, plunder, and ravage. In his earliest forays against humanity he was opposed by various businessmen suited types. He easily upstaged them and what was clearly needed was a hero to match him. Cole would get around to that.

The next Cole creation debuted in #3 (March 1940). Drawn in a somewhat more detailed version of the style he'd been developing, "Dickie Dean" dealt with a do-it-yourself kid inventor. At least, it started off being about the sort of hometown boy inventor Cole had been in his youth, but very soon Dickie was involved in wild

From *Funny Pages* #34, January 1940.

IT IS EVENING—THE AGED MEDICINE MAN, GREAT BIRD, CALLS HIS SON BEFORE HIM.
MY SON, THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOUR YOUNG BODY TO REPLACE THIS ANCIENT ONES.
THE SACRED SECRETS OF MAGIC HANDED DOWN FROM OUR FORE FATHERS SHALL BE YOURS TO KEEP UNTIL DEATH!
PERMIT THE SNAKE OF KNOWLEDGE TO BITE DEEPLY!
YOUNG MANTORA WHIRLS FASTER—FASTER—
AND FALLS INTO DEEP, HYPNOTIC SLUMBER.
IT IS DONE.
© 1940 Chesler Publications



For *Silver Streak* #7, Cole wrote and drew more that half of the 64-page magazine and did the cover as well. Not bad for a guy who edited the *rest* of the magazine.

and fantastic adventures that would've made even fellow scientists like Dr. Zarkov and Doc Huer envious. In issue #7 Cole introduced a nasty recurrent villain to tangle with Dickie and his pudgy sidekick, Zip. The sinister Professor Skinn is also an inventor, but a crazed one. Beaten and blinded by greedy relatives, Skinn vowed revenge. "I turned to science! This mechanical eye, my other inventions, aided greatly in wiping out a rotten family!" The eye alluded to is a large glaring gadget that Skinn wears atop his head, mounted on a metallic beanie and wired to his blind eyes. Sensing a fellow genius in teenage Dickie, the mad doctor attempts to recruit him. Dickie refuses and battle stretching across several issues ensues.

Among the inventions dreamed up by Professor Skinn were a magnetic truck that draws precious metals and money from banks and jewelry stores and vicious radio-controlled robots and eagles trained to drop blockbuster bombs. In his battl against Skinn Dickie used several inventions his own. These included the Sky Bug, a vehicl that resembled a flying soap box derby entry, a invisibility potion, and an antigravity ray.

The third issue also saw the advent of the Silv Streak character. The debut episode was draw by Joe Simon and had to do with a swami wh built racing cars as a hobby. Every time t entered his best machine, also known as th Silver Streak, in competitions giant insec swooped down and killed his driver. Eventually had difficulty recruiting drivers and had to resc to hypnotizing a clean-cut young taxi driver in

Although the cover to *Silver Streak* #6 (September 1940) was one of Cole's most impressive up to that time, the feature story wasn't by Cole, and didn't compare to his work on the title.

shape for the job. A giant fly killed the cab driver, too, but the swami brought him back to life and the young man took to driving around in the racing car, calling himself the Silver Streak and hunting for the giant insect manufacturer.

Cole took over the strip with the next issue, converting the Streak into a costumed superguy who was "the fastest man imaginable!!" The Flash, a.k.a. the "fastest man alive," had come flipping onto the newsstands just a couple of months earlier. Carrying on as though no changes had taken place, Cole had his speed demon continue with the pursuit and capture of the sinister scientist who'd been menacing the metropolis with big bugs and giant spiders. For a few months the Streak was the star of the magazine that bore his name. His costume went from being purple, green, and orange to a more striking red and yellow. Cole was obviously having fun with this one, cramming it with action, violence, explosions, monsters, pretty girls, and humor. Since some of the SS stories ran a full 11 pages, he had the opportunity for full page splashes and more intricately plotted adventures. He signed himself Ralph Johns and in #5 he addressed the reader directly to explain "some things you ought to know about SILVER STREAK." Apparently with a straight face Cole said, "His purpose in life is to help others — to help those in need. Silver Streak does his best to make this world an ideal place to live in — a world in which you and I will have the things we most desire. And he is out to get those forces that stand in the way of his ideals. He fights hard!! He

is strong because he is right — he is fast because he needs speed to conquer his enemies. Silver Streak is my hero and I hope he is your hero, too, for he does the things that you and I would do if we had his powers."

This device of addressing readers in a signed statement at the start of a story would later be picked up and developed into a personal trademark by Charles Biro, who came to work for *Silver Streak* during Cole's editorship.

Cole drew both the front and back covers of that fifth issue. He used a movie poster design for the back cover announcing the ominous news that the Claw was returning in the next issue:

> *THE MONSTER GIANT OF TERROR RETURNS TO THE PAGES OF SILVER STREAK COMICS.....MORE BRUTAL THAN EVER!!! Evil eyes peer into the crystal ball of the future, revealing a beautiful girl in the Claw's cruel torture chamber.....A large ocean liner being lifted like a toy.....A city wrecked by this greatest of all monsters!!! THESE ARE BUT A FEW OF THE THRILLS WAITING FOR YOU IN THE NEXT ISSUE!!"*

The Claw did return on the cover of #6 and Cole drew one of his most impressive covers to date, featuring a giant Claw about to crush a handful of agonized folks in his massive grip. But inside you found a tepid story about somebody called the Green Claw, drawn by Newton Alfred, not Cole. The early history of this monumental villain is somewhat fuzzy. For some reason he took a leave of absence after two issues, despite a note at the end of the second episode advising readers to "Watch for 'The Claw In America!'" in the next issue. Cole did a script for that third installment, though he apparently never drew it. Years later the script, doodled in pencil on sheets of typewriter paper, turned up in the files of the long-defunct Jacquet shop.

In #6 Daredevil also shows up. Cole has been given credit by at least one historian for having had a hand in this initial story, but that seems unlikely since it looks very much like the standard Chesler shop product and the artwork is by Jack Binder. Daredevil's debut occupies eight pages in the center of the book and is not an earthshaking one. We are told that Bart Hill was "orphaned by thugs who ruthlessly killed his parents and left him speechless by the torture they inflicted on him. Bart Hill grew into manhood possessed with the determination to destroy the forces of crime and evil!" The torture included, for motives not explained, having a boomerang-shaped brand burned into his chest. Sufficient reason probably for Daredevil to take to using the Australian weapon in his later crimefighting. The initial exploit is a fairly tame cops and robbers affair with the big, climactic battle is a place no more exotic than a lumber yard. The fact that Daredevil is mute isn't used to any purpose and about the only interesting thing about him is his costume. Skintight and divided from head to toe, bright crimson on the right and midnight blue on the left. A spiked belt, looking

"Cole did a script for the third installment of the Claw, though he apparently never drew it. Years later the script, doodled in pencil on sheets of typewriter paper, turned up in the files of the long-defunct Jacquet shop."

something like a large golden dog collar, adds just the right unsettling touch. Practical it isn't, but it helps build up the new character's sinister, almost Satanic, image. Even Binder's journeyman artwork can't completely spoil the effect.

The next month Cole started drawing the character and he did something audacious. He pretends he's working with an old established hero and proclaims on his poster-like bright red cover, "DAREDEVIL BATTLES THE CLAW." The *Silver Streak* logo appears in dinky letters along the top, indication that the crimson and blue fellow seen here is the star of the show. This was just a few months after the Human Torch and Sub-Mariner had carried on their monumental three issue battle in *Marvel Mystery Comics* and Cole must've assumed comic book readers would go for another full-scale fracas. He devoted the first 16 pages of the issue to round one, starting off with a socko splash page that shows the Claw, Daredevil, and a sparsely clad young woman about to be burned at the stake, and a half dozen or more sinister Asiatics. That's followed by a teaser disclaimer that states, "WARNING!! You are about to read one of the most astounding tales ever portrayed in a comic magazine! If you have a weak heart, we advise you NOT to venture further!" Cole was enjoying himself here; his drawing and writing show that. He manages to throw in the war in Europe, to introduce Bart Hill's lovely girl friend Tonia, to ignore the fact Bart was ever mute, to take us to the Claw's mountain stronghold in far-off Tibet, to show the Claw's sinister invasion army heading for America via their own private subterranean railway, and then climax it all with a battle in the streets of Manhattan between the gigantic Claw, the biggest thing to hit town since King Kong, and Daredevil.

The Claw's wild punches topple skyscrapers, Daredevil gives him a hotfoot with a stick of dynamite. At the windup of the contest the Claw scoops up our hero and makes a try at swallowing him alive. The resourceful DD has a trick up his

SO DREADFUL A CLAW AS I HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE!
THAT VAN IS SPEEDING AWAY WITH MY INVENTION!
I NEED HELP IN PURSUING THE VAN!
YOU GET IN THE SIDECAR!
AND I'LL DRIVE!
BLOODY HELL STARTED FIVE MINUTES AGO!
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
DICKIE DEAN
MEANWHILE, IN A MOUNTAIN HIDEOUT...
THE INVENTOR'S MOTHER-IN-LAW!
AND SO THE TWO INVENTORS UNKNOWINGLY ENTER A RACE WITH EACH OTHER — A RACE OF INVENTIONS — AND FOR GOOD MEASURE, THE OTHER TWO RUSH
I FINISHED A SUCCESS! NOW I'LL BE ABLE TO GET A JOB FOR YOU, DEBBIE!
YOU WANT ME TO BE SOMEBODY'S DEBBIE?
SOON AFTER:
ZIP! IT WORKS! ZIP! GUESS I'LL SLEEP
HEY MOM! DAD! WE'VE FINISHED OUR —
THAT'S FUNNY — I THINK I WERE HERE AN HOUR AGO
A NOTE
GULP!
SWOOSH! I WISH I HAD YOU HERE AS PALE AS A GHOST!
DOESN'T MATTER!
AND WHAT'S THAT?
WHAT! GOOD JOB! PACK UP POLICE!
WHAT'S THAT?
WHAT'S IT SAY?
PROF. SKINN! I MIGHT'A KNOWN!
MAYBE YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW I GOT FREE, HUH? WELL, I'LL TELL YOU! I JUMPED OUT OF THE WINDOW AND SLID DOWN THE BANISTERS!
SINCE SKINN

Cole invested his fascination with inventing into many of his stories. This one, from *Silver Streak* #8 (March 1941) displays Cole's antic sense of humor, even though the tale suddenly takes a serious turn.

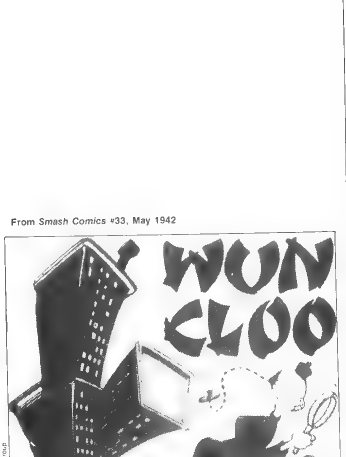
sleeve. "If dynamite down his windpipe fails, I'll be ground meat!" But the unexpected explosion works, causing the Claw to cough up his enemy. Cole carried the battle for three more issues.

That seventh issue was Cole's most ambitious one. In addition to editing it, he wrote and drew 38 of the magazine's 64 pages and did the cover as well. The 16-page Daredevil-Claw confrontation led off, followed by on eight page Silver Streak adventure, eight pages of Dickie Dean and six devoted to a brand new character named the Pirate Prince. After creating this "swashbuckling, daring Robin Hood of the sea," Cole drew him for just one issue. Pretty much an Errol Flynn without moustache, the Prince was, like many of Cole's earlier heroes, a champion of the underdog. He and his crew of "jolly companions . . . preyed on the unjust and liberated those imprisoned in slave ships." Cole gave his yarn a Caribbean setting and in it, amidst much swordplay and a bit of wenching, his unusual buccaneer frees a boatload of African slaves bound for America. Although the artwork is lively and inventive, you can tell that Cole, not surprisingly, rushed this job.

His last work on Daredevil and Dickie Dean appeared in *Silver Streak* #10 (May 1941) and by that time he'd given up the editor's job and gone to work for the Quality Comics Group. His work, especially the bravura performance on #7, had come to the attention of Everett "Busy" Arnold and he was about to embark on the most productive and successful phase of his comic book career.

6

From *Smash Comics* #33, May 1942



Everett M. Arnold was a graduate of Brown University. Better known as Busy Arnold, he was in his late 30s when he launched his comic-book line and, like several other pioneers in the field, he'd been in the printing business. He was involved in printing *Funny Pages* and *Funny Picture Stories*. Possibly made cautious by the less than smashing success of these and other Cook-Mahon titles, Arnold made certain he had solvent partners for his own venture. They included Frank J. Markey, who was an executive with the McNaught Syndicate and also ran a subsidiary syndicate of his and the Cowles family. These latter folks owned the Register & Tribune Syndicate, the newspaper of the same name, and *Look Magazine*. For his editor Arnold brought in a cartoonist named Ed Cronin.

Arnold's earliest title was *Feature Funnies*, which had begun life in the autumn of 1937 devoted mostly to newspaper strip reprints. By early 1940, however, now known as *Feature Comics*, it consisted mainly of original material. Its star super-hero was the teenie weenie Doll Man, a creation of Will Eisner and Lou Fine. From 1939 on the Quality Comic Group added six more titles — *Smash Comics*, *Crack Comics*, *Hit Comics*, *Police Comics*, *National Comics*, and *Military Comics*. The last two were edited, and co-owned, by Will Eisner.

For his early issues Arnold relied on shops like the one operated by Eisner and S.M. "Jerry" Iger. After Eisner created the weekly *Spirit* booklets for Arnold and the Register & Tribune Syndicate, and after Eisner and Iger had split up, Quality began to accumulate its own staff of artists and writers. These included Gill Fox, Lou Fine, Tony DiPreta, Bob Powell, Tex Blaisdell, and Nick Cardy. There were also freelancers like Paul Gustavson, Art Pinajian, and Vernon Henkel.

The very first Quality appearance Jack Cole made was as a bigfoot man, in *Smash Comics* #17 (December 1940) where he drew a two page "Wun Cloo" filler. This was a mock detective strip created by Fox, full of pidgen English, puns, mayhem, and slapstick. Cole had the Defective Detective captured by a bald arch-criminal known as Professor Grrr. In the course of trying to escape, Win Cloo whips out a bottle of green potion and gulps it down. "One swallow of 'SUPER PUTTY JUICE' make body plenty plastic!" After stretching clear of the teeth of buzz saw, the Oriental sleuth reshapes his face and body, turning himself into a horrible monster that frightens the evil professor into giving up to the law. Here, obviously, was a notion Cole was fond of.

In "Wun Cloo" (this page is from *Smash Comics* #34, July 1942), Cole's forte lay in his ability to create a sight gag in virtually every panel, without disrupting the telling of the story.

In the next issue of *Smash* Cole began his first adventure strip for the Quality line. Titled "Midnight," it dealt with a fellow who donned a mask to fight crime. "By day, Dave Clark is just an ordinary American. . . A spot announcer for Station WXAM explained the opening copy. "But darkness finds him in the garb of MIDNIGHT, an avenging friend of the needy." At the time of Midnight's debut Arnold already had a couple of others who fought crime while decked out in dark cowl, slouch hat, and mask. Over in *Crack Comics* there was George E. Brenner's veteran gentleman sleuth, The Clock, and running every Sunday in his own newspaper comic book was Eisner's Spirit.

Will Eisner contends that Cole concocted Midnight as a deliberate Spirit simulacrum at Arnold's behest. "Arnold got the idea that since the war was coming and I was going to be drafted . . . he wanted to have somebody, in case I got killed, to replace the Spirit. Because I owned the Spirit and he knew if anything happened to me he couldn't continue it." After acknowledging that this "got me angry," Eisner says, "but Jack Cole, being the great humorous genius he was, immediately altered it" away from an out-and-out imitation. Since Cole and Eisner were original and inventive artists, the two features did develop in different directions. While both men refused to take the profession of masked crimefighter completely seriously, Eisner became more interested in urban melodramas and romances of the mean streets while Cole pursued fantasy and science fiction and, on occasion, a much more bizarre

Cole and Will Eisner were not only masters of the inventive splash page, but they both drew some of the loveliest ladies that comics of the '40s ever saw. (*Smash Comics* #34, July 1942.)

approach to violence.

The early *Midnight* episodes are rather flamboyantly colored, by the way, with many red business suits, yellow automobiles, green skyscrapers, and purple skies. Cole had nothing to do with this, and most of the other Quality material at the time had this bright, eccentric look. Gill Fox believes (and he ought to know) that Arnold was colorblind. But he didn't let that deter him from supervising the coloring work.

Spirit stand-in or not, Midnight wasn't launched with any hoopla. He was given just five pages to introduce and establish himself in the magazine and there was no mention of him on the cover at all. Although *Smash* had been in business for a year and a half, it had thus far failed to come up with a heavyweight contender. The earliest issues had showcased Eisner's *Espionage* and Brenner's clunky *Bozo the Robot*. Issue #14 introduced the Ray, a yellow-clad super-hero type, beautifully drawn by the gifted Lou Fine. When Midnight slipped unobtrusively in at the back of the book, the designated star of *Smash* was undoubtedly the Ray. But neither Fine nor his anatomically correct superguy were a match for Jack Cole and his masked man. Cole had the advantage in that he could not only draw but write as well and, like his old Chesler stablemate Biro, he understood comic books and knew they had different rules than the funny papers. He knew how to tell an entertaining story in comic-book terms and, equally important, how to package it. The task took several months, but before 1941 was over, Midnight was the uncontested champ. He first

MIDNIGHT
HERE YA ARE GANG! MIDNIGHT'S NOT GOT NINE PAGES ALL WE ASKED FOR!
GABBY
DOC WACKEY
I HOPE YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THIS BIZARRE ADVENTURE OF DAVE CLARK ALIAS MIDNIGHT.. TELL ME WHY NOT?
PRESENTING.... THE DEATH OF MIDNIGHT!!
By JACK COLE

At first glance, Cole seems to be out to kill off his hero, but the caption hints that he might just be kidding. (*Smash Comics* #36, October 1942.)

soloed on the cover of #28 (November 1941) and was on every one thereafter until *Smash* ceased to be in the fall of 1949.

Midnight commenced his career as an even bigger loner than the Spirit, working without benefit of sidekick, police contact or lady friend. Like Cole, the former boy inventor, the masked crimebuster was fond of gadgets. His favorite weapon was "his secret vacuum gun, an automatic that throws a suction cup which is connected to a self-winding reel of fine silk cord strong enough to hold a man's weight." The first two cases Midnight cracked involved graft and corruption in the construction business and graft and maltreatment in an orphanage. In his third foray, though, he "slashes out against the supernatural" and combats a turbaned no-good named Chango. This bewhiskered wizard could make safes sprout legs and run toward him, he could cause buildings to rise up and fly away, and he could change Midnight into a puff of smoke. Midnight uses a hypnotic dart, shot into Chango's backside, to subdue him.

As the series progressed Midnight took on a small crew. Whereas some costumed crimefighters at the time were taking on teenage lads for sidekicks, Midnight teamed up with a monkey. A talking monkey named, aptly enough, Gabby. The next addition to his group was a whitebearded mad scientist known as Doc Wackey. Wackey was originally a villain, who had invented a capsule that reduces adults to babies. He delivers this drug in person, using a bean shooter to send it into his victims' gaping mouths. During his

© 1942 Quality Comics Group

Midnight goes to Hell in *Smash Comics* #36. (October 1942.)

first encounter with Midnight the good doctor is converted. "I'm going to give you another chance," says Midnight. "How would you like to join up with US and work AGAINST crime??" The reformed criminal, as we'll see, was one of Cole's favorite character types. Wackey's many inventions, which included a two-way wrist radio that preceded Dick Tracy's by a good five years, aided Midnight in his anti-crime crusade. Cole's stories showed considerable variety, with tales of bloody murder in Hollywood alternating with fantasies about mean-minded mystics who can walk through walls and death rays that melt people down to multicolored ooze.

Cole's artwork made a leap ahead with Midnight. His line became finer and more assured, his layouts and staging grew even more inventive and audacious. Eisner recalls Cole dropping in at his Tudor City studio in Manhattan during this period to talk shop. "We influenced each other, you know," Eisner told me. "There was a great deal of give and take, back and forth . . . . We'd talk about timing and rhythm and movement and so forth." Another of Cole's influences was movies and he came to see, Eisner believes, that "the camera was the eye." Equally important was his interest in animation. One area in which Cole definitely competed with Eisner was with logos and splash panels. The *Midnight* title was almost always part of an elaborate design. The time and attention he was lavishing on his Quality work would eventually cause him deadline problems, but right now Cole was having a good time exploring the possibilities of the comic-book page.

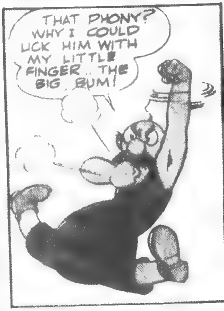
In the fall of 1942, in order to concentrate on Plastic Man, Cole was forced to abandon Midnight. By this time, as the acknowledged star turn in *Smash*, the masked man occupied nine pages in the lead spot. For his next-to-last continuity Cole came up with a two-parter he called "The Death of Midnight!!" This was prefaced with a warning, "We hope you don't really believe this bizarre adventure." Bizarre it was. As a result of a rough and tumble bout with a baldheaded crook known as Cyclops Ceylon, Midnight falls from a cliff and is killed. When his soul reaches St. Peter, he asks if he can go to Hell instead of Heaven, explaining, "You see, being a crimefighter I'd like nothing better than to have a crack at the worst criminal of all! . . . The DEVIL!!" He gets his wish, goes sliding down and down to meet up with not only Satan but a sexy, redhaired lady who turns out to be the devil's spouse. While a resident of the fiery kingdom, Midnight leads a revolt of the other lost souls. Midway through that, however, he's snatched back to life. Seems a mistake has been made and he wasn't supposed to die at all. So Midnight returns to the living, but, like Sherlock Holmes before him, his death took something out of him and he was never quite the same again. Cole bid him farewell with the story in *Smash* #38 (December 1942) and Paul Gustavson took over. We'll take a look at Cole's postwar stint with Midnight in a later chapter.

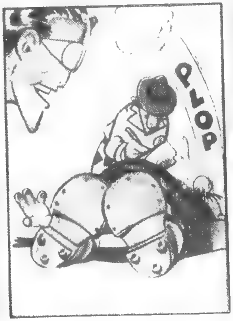
OH OH! HERE WE COMES!
I'M GONNA RUN DOWNTOWN FOR A SPELL. WANT TO COME ALONG?
YOU BET! LET'S GO!
WAIT'LL I DON THIS DRESS!
AN HAT!
SWUSH!
SWELL!
AND HERE WE ARE!

From *National Comics* #22, April 1942.

BURP-THE-TWERP? I'M SLOP FROM THE DAILY GLOBE! WE'RE INTERVIEWING ALL THE SUPER MEN IN COMICS! JUST WHAT CAN YOU DO THAT'S SUPER?
ARE YOU KIDDIN?

THE SUPER SO-AN-SO





From *Police Comics* #23, September 19

BURP TWERP
THE SUPER SON-OF-A-GUN
by GALEN CLARK
THERES TERRY THE TERRIBLE!! HE DOESN'T KNOW THE MEANING OF THE WORD QUIT !!
HES GONNA TACKLE BURP THE TWERP!!
PUT UP YOUR DUKES, TWERP, AND SAVE OFF YOUR OWN MURDER FOR A FEW SECONDS!
THEY TELL ME YOU'RE QUITE A FIGHTER!
WELL COOKIE YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO BE!!
HEH, HEH I'M LETTIN YOU HIT ME ON PURPOSE TO BE A OVER-CONFIDENT
HA! BET THAT HURT YOUR HAND PLENTY !!
LOOKIT ME FOLKS!—I'M WINDIN' HIM!! HE CANT LAST MUCH LONGER!!
I'LL PUT HIM OUT OF HIS MISERY ONCE AND FOR ALL !!
WINNING!
SWISH
BAM
GOOD GOSH, HE'S BLOWN TO BITS!!! THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO FIGHT! ITS TOO GRUESOME FOR WORDS!
I WONT GET AWAY FROM HERE!
QUITTER!! CANT TAKE IT EH? I TOLD YA ID WIN!
WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A GUY LIKE THAT?

From *Police Comics* #10, June 1942.

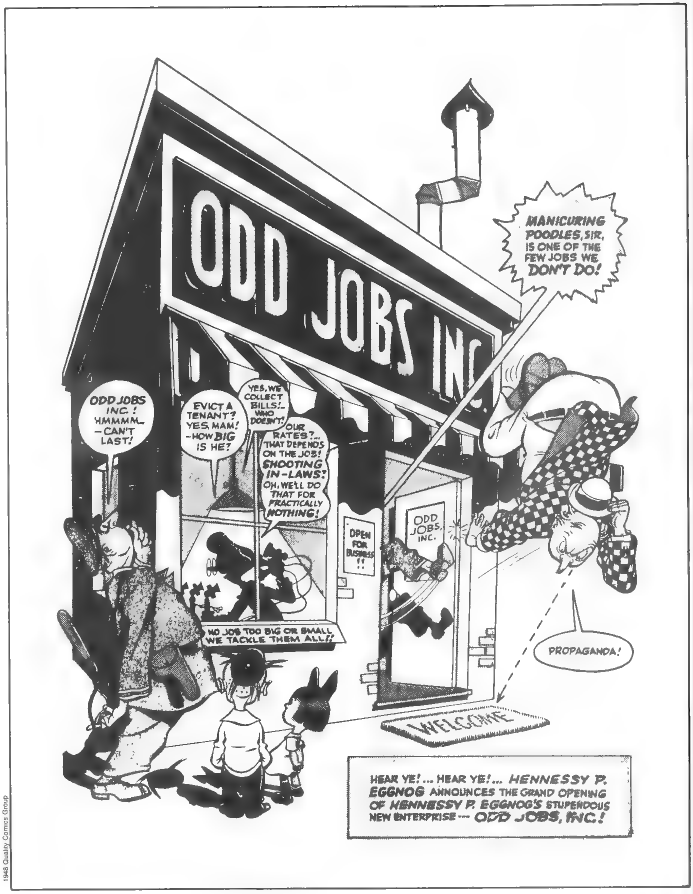
HOME
IN THE
OZARKS
By Jack Cole
RESTING IN HIS HOME-MADE HAMMOCK IS WEE "CORNEY" COBB
Z Z Z Z
OH CORNEY, COME HYAR!
Z Z Z Z Z Z
ENTER
EXIT
HYAR! COME
CORNEY!
BUT, ALAS, GRANMA'S WORDS MERELY GO IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER!
CORNEY!
PORE LIL' TYKE— HE'S PLUMB TUCKERED OUT——MUSTO BIN A-THINKIN OF WORK AGIN!!
MIGHTS WELL LET HIM DOZE WHILE AH PURTIES HIM UP!!
1938 Comics Publications

From *Star Ranger Funnies* #1, December 1938.

THAR! HE'S ALL READY!
AH HATES T WAKE THUH DEAR, BU
BAM!
LET'S GO 'ROUND AGIN, MAH LOVE—MEBBIE WE'LL GIT THUH BRASS RING!
W-WHERE AM AH?!—AH'D SWEAR AH HAD A NIGHTMARE EFFIN AH DINT KNOW AH WUZ SLEEPIN' IN THUH DAYTIME!
DONT YO REC'LECT, CORNEY?—IT'S TIME FO' YORE DATE WIF COUSIN FANNY
NO SUH! AH HATES FANNY!
YO WHUT?
(GULP) AH DON LIKE FANNY!
YO WHUT?
A-A-AH THINK, FANNY'S AWRITE
HMMMMM! ONCE MORE, NOW—YO WHUT?
GORSH, AH'M RIGHT CRAZY 'BOUT FANNY!
THAT'S BETTER NOW GIT WIF YUH 'FORE YORE LATE!
BUT CORNEY IS LATE!—IN FACT, IT TAKES HIM TWO WEEKS TO GET TO FANNY'S ABODE—ONLY ONE MILE AWAY
AW SHECKS! MIGHT'S WELL GIT THUH DATE OVAH WIF! DERN WIMMEN!

LO!- BE FANNY IN?
YORE TOO LATE, COBB!- FANNY UP AN' GOT HITCHED LAS' WEEK, ON HER TWELVETH BIRTHDAY!
SHE DID? (AH HOPE)
YUP!- LEM WILKIN'S BOY, TRUMON, GOT HISN SOSHIAL SECURITY RECINT, AN' PERPOSES T' ME FER FANNY'S HAND- WHICH AH GIVE HIM ALONG WIF TH' REST OF HER CARCASS!
WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE THET LETS ME OUT!— G'BYE, NOW!
HOWEVAH, YORE NOT TOO LATE FO MAH OTHER DATTER—SAMANTHY BY NAME!!
B-BUT AH- AH DON' WANT A GAL!- I—
FOAH MONTH'S OLD AN' NEIGH ON RIPE FER HOUSEWORK AN' PLOWIN!
RECKON YO TWO'LL WANT T'BE ALONE! AH KIN TAKE A HINT!!
HUMP!
PEAS
GOO!
STOPPIT, YUH LITTLE FLIRT!
SMAK!
GO 'WAY! YUH MAKES ME SICK!

SNIFF
SNIFF
SNIFF
SNIFF
SPURNED LOVE KNOWS GREAT SUFFERING, AND SAMANTHY MAKES A DESPERATE DECISION—SHE DECIDES TO MAKE CORNEY JEALOUS!
NONCHALANTLY CRAWLING TO THE DOOR, SAMANTHY GIVES A LUSTY YELP
SOOEEE
WHUT THA! PIGS!
OINK!
GOO!
DISGUSTIN'!
SMAK!
THET'S THUH LAS' STRAW! AH CAINT STAND SICH A DISGUSTIN SIGHT!
NAOW GIT!
OINK!
JACK COLE
-AN DONT THINK YUH MADE ME JELLUS, EITHER! YO-YO PEST!
SMAK!
AW, WHUT'S THUH USE?


ODD JOBS INC.
MANICURING POODLES, SIR, IS ONE OF THE FEW JOBS WE DON'T DO!
ODD JOBS INC.! HMMMM — CAN'T LAST!
EVICT A TENANT? YES, MAM! — HOW BIG IS HE?
YES, WE COLLECT BILLS! — WHO DOESN'T!
OUR RATES? — THAT DEPENDS ON THE JOB! SHOOTING IN-LAWS? OH, WE'LL DO THAT FOR PRACTICALLY NOTHING!
OPEN FOR BUSINESS!!
ODD JOBS, INC.
NO JOB TOO BIG OR SMALL WE TACKLE THEM ALL!!
PROPAGANDA!
WELCOME
HEAR YE! ... HEAR YE! ... HENNESSY P. EGGNOG ANNOUNCES THE GRAND OPENING OF HENNESSY P. EGGNOG'S STUPENDOUS NEW ENTERPRISE — ODD JOBS, INC.!

1946 Quality Comics Group

From *All Humor Comics* #3, Spring 1946.

BETSY AND ME
8-31
by COLL
Did I tell you about the time Mr Meyer let us 4 doorwalkers sit in on a real board meeting for experience?.
Boy there I am with all the Big wheels!
THE MEETING WILL COME TO ORDER
BUILDING A TABLE MR MEYER ??
..AND OUR NET INCOME FOR LAST MONTH WAS, OFF $5,000
BOY, THOSE NETS AREN'T SELLING WORTH A HOOT HUH, MR MEYER?
Mr. Meyer asked, ANY SUGGESTIONS?
Mr Smedley said, I SUGGEST A DRASTIC CUT IN OUR OVERHEAD!
WHAT GOOD IS A LEAKY ROOF?
My pal, Alfred Alfred said, A THOROUGH STUDY OF CONSUMER-MOTIVATION MIGHT—
BOY, THAT IS A GOOD ONE, ALFRED, I'LL SAY!
I'M NOT FINISHED!
Finally, it was My turn!
OKAY, YOU! LET'S HAVE IT!
HOW ABOUT GIVING FREE HOT DOGS WITH EVERY MINK COAT?
Then, the Big Thrill when K K Winnley said, I MOVE WE ADJOURN!
and I got to SECOND IT!
I was in the clouds!
HOYA SAY!
IF THEY'D HAD MUSTARD IN THERE, BY NOW YOU'D BE DELICIOUS!
Anyway, my suggestion must have helped because they haven't had to call on me since!

SILVER STREAK
by Jack Johns
ALL AMERICA IS AGOG AT THE ACOMPLISHMENTS OF THE WORLDS ACE OF SPEED, SILVER STREAK —SO MUCH SO THAT THEY DO NOT EVEN TAKE NOTICE WHEN ONE SIR CEDRIC BALDWIN CROSSES THE ATLANTIC IN RECORD TIME ABOARD HIS SUPER PLANE!
ZOUNDS!—EVAHTHING APPENS TO ME!—FIVE BLOOMIN' YEARS HI SPENDS IN PAWFECTING A SUPAH AIRCRAFT...HI CROSS THE OCEAN IN TEN OURS SMAWSH ALL SPEED RECORDS FOR WHAT?—TO BE PUSHED BACK TO THE COMIC PAGE BY A BLIGHTER NAMED SILVAH STREAK!
DAILY NEWS
SILVER STREAM FASTEST MAN ON EARTH CAPTURES 10 OF KNIERS
FAWSTEST MAN ON EARTH!—BAH! I'LL SUE 'IM—NO, I'LL CHALLENGE THE FAKIR TO A RACE!—WE'LL SEE WHO'S THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE!
DAILY NEWS
SILVER STREAK FASTEST MAN ON EARTH CAPTURES 10 KNIERS
DATS IT BOSS DATS IT!
SIR CEDRIC PHONES SILVER STREAK—
RACE?—SORRY, BUT I HAVEN'T MUCH TIME FOR THAT SORT OF THING!
WHY YOU YELLAH PUP! WAIT'LL THE PAPERS FIND OUT THAT SILVAH STREAK IS A FAKE!
OUT THE WINDOW FLIES THE STREAK
SO HE'S GONNA GET NASTY IS HE!
HI SAY!
THAT'S ENOUGH! YOU'RE ON!
© 1940 New Friday Publications

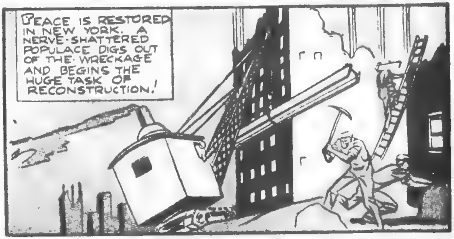
From *Silver Streak* #5, September 1940.

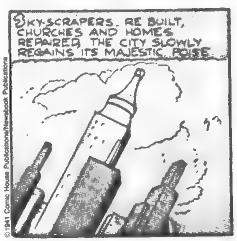
SILVER STREAK
FLASH!!
SILVER STREAK COMICS PRESENTS THE FIRST "TWO-IN-ONE" STORY EVER TO APPEAR IN A COMIC MAGAZINE!.. AND STARRING THE ACE OF SPEED SILVER STREAK AND WHIZ, THE KING OF FALCONS IN A STORY THAT PACKS THE THRILLS, ACTION AND EXCITEMENT OF TWO STORIES INTO ONE LIGHTNING EPISODE!
WHAT IS A "TWO-IN-ONE" STORY? READ AND FIND OUT!
YES SPEAKING
SILVER STREAK THIS IS HARMON OF THE F.B.I. I'M CALLING TO ASK A FAVOR OF YOU
WE NEED YOUR HELP IN STEMMING SPY ACTIVITIES HERE ON THE WEST COAST. I CAN'T SAY ANY MORE OVER THE PHONE, BUT IF YOU CAN GET OUT HERE SOON I'LL GIVE YOU THE DETAILS!
COUNT ME IN, HARMON
WE'LL BE RIGHT OUT!
C'MON WHIZ, WE'VE GOT A DATE WITH THE LOWES- FORM OF LUMAN - TRAITORS TO THE U.S.A.!
MIGHTY WELL SAVE THAT FARE...
AND ME!
KAWLEE! KAWLEE!
TOOT! TOOT!
NO, HENRY DON'T... PLEASE!
LET GO!

From *Silver Streak* #8, March 1941.

DAREDEVIL RECENTLY THWARTED A FIENDISH PLOT OF THE WORLD'S WORST VILLIAN, *THE CLAW*. THIS MONSTER BUILT A GIGANTIC TUNNEL UNDER THE ATLANTIC OCEAN AND CAME UP IN NEW YORK CITY, LAYING WASTE HUGE SECTIONS OF THE METROPOLIS BEFORE THE RECKLESS DAREDEVIL WAS ABLE TO PUT AN END TO HIS ATTEMPTED INVASION OF AMERICA.

THE TERRIFYING QUESTION LEFT IN EVERYONE'S MIND IS:
"WHERE AND WHEN WILL THE CLAW STRIKE NEXT???"


PEACE IS RESTORED IN NEW YORK. A NERVE-SHATTERED POPULACE DIGS OUT OF THE WRECKAGE AND BEGINS THE HUGE TASK OF RECONSTRUCTION!



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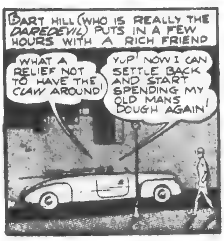
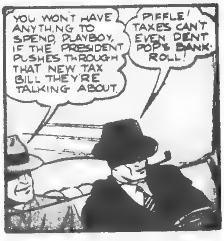

DART HILL (WHO IS REALLY THE DAREDEVIL) PUTS IN A FEW HOURS WITH A RICH FRIEND
WHAT A RELIEF NOT TO HAVE THE CLAW AROUND!
YUP! NOW I CAN SETTLE BACK AND START SPENDING MY OLD MANS DOUGH AGAIN!


YOU WON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SPEND PLAYBOY, IF THE PRESIDENT PUSHES THROUGH THAT NEW TAX BILL THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT
PIFFLE! TAXES CAN'T EVEN DENT POP'S BANK ROLL!

From *Silver Streak* #8, March 1941.

MR. PRESIDENT I DEMAND TO KNOW THE MEANING OF YOUR TRAGEOUS ACTIONS!
WHAT AUTHORITY HAVE YOU TO QUESTION ME IN
AS A CITIZEN OF THE U.S.A. I'VE A RIGHT TO MY OPINION IN THIS MATTER!
I THINK THAT MR. PRESIDENT! ARE YOU LISTENING?
YES AND I'M ORDERING YOUR IMMEDIATE ARREST!
YOUR EYES— THEY'RE SO STARRY SO GLOSSY! WHY YOU LOOK LIKE YES, YOU ARE IN A TRANCE!
RIDICULOUS!
CALL THE HOUSE PHYSICIAN!
WHO ARE YOU? HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?
AT DAREDEVILS INSISTENCE THE PRESIDENT IS EXAMINED
YOU'RE RIGHT! THE PRESIDENT IS IN A STATE OF COMA!
THIS IS THE WORK OF THE CLAW I'LL WAGER!!
NEWS SPREADS OVER THE NATION LIKE WILDFIRE THE VICE PRESIDENT TAKES OVER THE PRESIDENTIAL DUTIES IN THIS EMERGENCY.
NOW REMEMBER MY INSTRUCTIONS
I'LL DO MY BEST!
THE VICE PRES RECEIVES INSTRUCTIONS
DO NOT FOR AN INSTANT BE CAUGHT OFF YOUR GUARD! STEEL YOUR MIND AGAINST THIS INVISIBLE HYPNOTIC FORCE!
THAT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN FIGHT IT!
FOR THE SECOND TIME IN AS MANY MONTHS PEACE IS RESTORED THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF DAREDEVIL!
HERE'S A REFUND ON OVER TAXATION MR JONES
I DIDN'T THINK THE MAN VOTED FOR COULD DO SUCH A THING AND BE IN HIS RIGHT MIND THANKS FOR THE REFUND
DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH THE CLAW RAGES
IT'S HAPPENED AGAIN! THAT CURSED DAREDEVIL HAS FOILED MY PLANS FOR DESTROYING THE U.S.A.
BUT THERE ARE OTHER AND MORE DRASTIC WAYS TO FORCE THIS PROUD NATION TO ITS KNEES
MEN! COME FORWARD!
OUR CAUSE MUST WIN WE CANNOT LOSE IF YOU WILL BUT DO YOUR DUTY I SHALL PLOT THE BORING MACHINE FOLLOWED BY MY TANK DIVISIONS!
NOW BOARD THE TANKS AND AWAIT MY SIGNAL!

From *Silver Streak* #8, September 1940.

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Cover of *Smash Comics*, October 1949.

Cover of *Smash Comics* #80, December 1948.

ANOTHER THRILLING ADVENTURE WITH
MIDNIGHT!!!
THE MERE MENTION OF THE NAME BRINGS TERROR TO THE FACES OF HARDBITTEN CRIMINALS!!
THIS ENEMY OF CRIME, S REALLY DAVE CLARK, SPOT ANNOUNCER FOR STATION WGAM. BUT WHEN NIGHT'S INKY BLACKNESS DESCENDS, HE DONS THE BLACK GARB OF MIDNIGHT AND CONTINUES HIS RELENTLESS WAR ON THE UNDERWORLD!!
THE MAN MOST FEARED BY THE UNDERWORLD!
THE
REAL STREET S NEARLY DESERTED AS C.I.D. MR. HOBBS AMBLES HOME... SUDDENLY
HELP!! IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN HELP ME!!
?
PLEASE MISTER!! CALL A DOCTOR I-I'M DYING YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME!!!
Y-YES, YES! RIGHT AWAY!!
REFUSE

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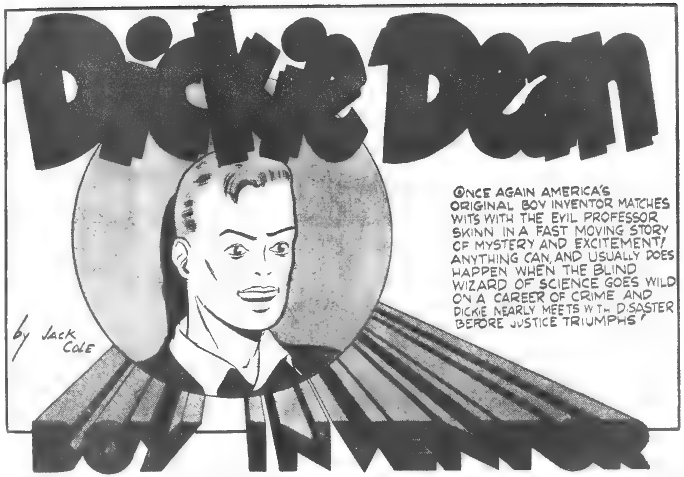
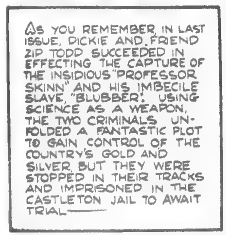
From *Smash Comics* #30, January 1942.


Dickie Dean
BOY INVENTOR
by Jack Cole
ONCE AGAIN AMERICA'S ORIGINAL BOY INVENTOR MATCHES WITS WITH THE EVIL PROFESSOR SKINN IN A FAST MOVING STORY OF MYSTERY AND EXCITEMENT! ANYTHING CAN AND USUALLY DOES HAPPEN WHEN THE BLIND WIZARD OF SCIENCE GOES WILD ON A CAREER OF CRIME AND DICKIE NEARLY MEETS WITH DISASTER BEFORE JUSTICE TRIUMPHS!


AS YOU REMEMBER IN LAST ISSUE, DICKIE AND FRIEND ZIP TODD SUCCEEDED IN EFFECTING THE CAPTURE OF THE INSIDIOUS PROFESSOR SKINN AND HIS IMBECILE SLAVE, "BLUBBER," USING SCIENCE AS A WEAPON. THE TWO CRIMINALS, UNFOLDED A FANTASTIC PLOT TO GAIN CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY'S GOLD AND SILVER. BUT THEY WERE STOPPED IN THEIR TRACKS AND IMPRISONED IN THE CASTLETON JAIL TO AWAIT TRIAL——

From *Silver Streak* #8, March 1941.

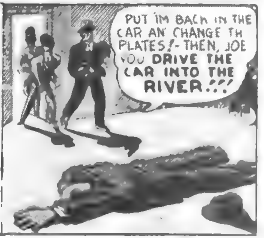
LITTLE DYNAMITE
IT'S EARLY EVENING IN A GREAT METROPOLIS-TWO FURTIVE FIGURES STEP UP TO A PARKED CAR.-
OK, MIKE.-FIX THE EXHAUST-I'LL GET THE LOCK!
MY CAR! IT'S BEEN STOLEN!!
LOOK, JOE, THAT LICENSE NUMBER!-IT'S THE NUMBER OF THE STOLEN CAR!!!
COPS!
I-I-CAN'T SEE!-WE'VE GOTTA STOP BEFORE I WRECK THE CAR!
THUS THE BANDITS ESCAPE!!
THE NEXT DAY AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CHIEF ALLEN CALLS IN DEN TRUMPSON-BETTER KNOWN AS "LITTLE DYNAMITE"
GOT A JOB FOR YOU, TRUMPSON-A TOUGH ONE!
THAT'S MUSIC TO MY EARS, SIR!

From *Keen Detective Funnies* #2, September 1938.

LAST NIGHT WAS THE TENTH TIME A CAR HAS BEEN STOLEN FROM THE THIRD PRECINCT THIS MONTH!—THEY'VE MADE A CLEAN GETAWAY EACH TIME BECAUSE THEY INSTAL A [illegible] IN THE GARAGE THAT COMPLETELY BLINDS ANYONE CHASING THEM!
THEY'RE A SMART MOB!—WE HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN ABLE TO LOCATE THEIR HIDE-OUT—BUT THIS TIME WE'LL OUT-SMART THEM!
WHERE DO I FIT IN??
RIGHT HERE!—WE'RE GOING TO LET THEM STEAL THIS CAR!—OUR MECHANIC BUILT THIS SECRET COMPARTMENT FOR A SMALL MAN—AND YOU'RE SMALL.
MIKE, HERE, WILL DON STREET CLOTHES AND DRIVE TO THE SAME SPOT EVERY NIGHT, PARK AND LEAVE THE CAR [illegible]—AN HOUR—YOU'LL BE INSIDE WHEN IT'S STOLEN!
O.K. CHIEF!
FOR SIX NIGHTS LITTLE DYNAMITE LAY INSIDE THE SECRET COMPARTMENT WITH OUT INCIDENT—
THEN—ON THE SEVENTH NIGHT!—
SORRY TO HAVE TO DO THIS TRUMPSON, BUT WE'VE GOT TO LOCATE THEIR HIDEOUT!
I'M USED TO IT NOW SIR!
MIKE PARKS THE CAR IN THE USUAL SPOT AND CASUALLY STROLLS AWAY FROM IT
[illegible] MINUTES LATER A MAN [illegible] STEALTHILY!
IT HAPPENS!—LITTLE DYNAMITE FINDS HIMSELF BEING TAKEN TO A GARAGE AND UP A RAMP TO THE THIRD FLOOR—THEY STOP—
OPEN UP JOE!
CLANG CLANG CLANG

THE DOOR OPENS INTO A MAMMOTH ROOM WHICH IS LITERALLY FILLED WITH "HOT" CARS!
THRU A PEEK-HOLE, BEN VIEWS THE PROCEEDINGS
ANOTHER CAR FOR YOU, HIENEY - HOW ABOUT UGH?
YOU DIRTY WEASEL!

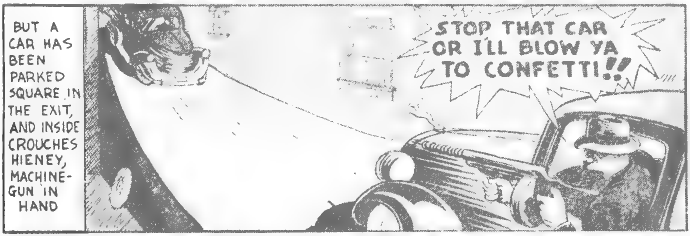
BEN BARELY SUCCEEDS IN GETTING BACK TO HIS HIDING PLACE WHEN THE THUGS RETURN

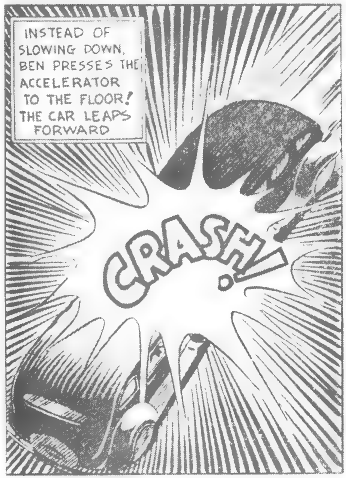


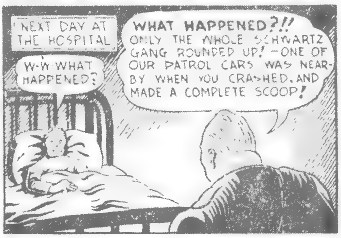
BEN MUST EITHER FACE THESE KILLERS OR SUFFER CERTAIN DEATH IF HE REMAINS IN THE CAR!
HE DECIDES TO FIGHT IT OUT!!
I-I- CAN'T PUSH THIS DOOR--!! IT'S STUCK!
HURRY UP!- I'LL GO DOWN FRONT AN SEE IF THE COAST IS CLEAR!
COLD BEADS OF SWEAT RUN DOWN BEN'S FACE- HE MUST GET THAT DOOR OPEN OR DROWN LIKE A RAT! SUDDENLY HE EXERTS ALL HIS STRENGTH
WHAT THA-?
CRACK
JOE!
BAM!
WHAT'S GOIN ON HERE?- WELL I'LL-
STICK 'EM UP!!
OH NO YA DON'T!
GOT 'IM!!
BUT THE KILLER IS PLAYING POSSUM
!
TAKE THAT, COPPER!

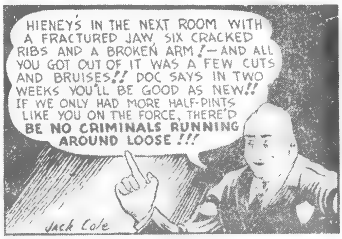
HIS SHOULDER PAINFULLY WOUNDED, BEN DESPERATELY PLUNGES AT THE THUG, AND KICKS HIS REVOLVER FROM HIS HAND!
WHY YOU!
I'LL PLAYBOZE YOU, RUNT!
FALLING OVERWHELMING ODDS, BEN SUCCEEDS IN STAVING OFF THE FIRST BARRAGE OF FISTS.
SWISH
THEN, A TERRIFIC LEFT-HANDED BLOW TO THE SOLAR PLEXUS FELLS THE GUNMAN
OOOF!
NOW TO GET OUT OF HERE — IF I CAN!
DISGUISED IN JOE'S CAP AND COAT, BEN GETS IN THE CAR AND STARTS SLOWLY DOWN THE RAMP
HERE'S HOPIN THEY DONT RECOGNIZE ME!
BLOW YOUR
A GARAGE ATTENDANT APPROACHES
HEY, JOE — WHAT'S BEEN KEEPIN — WHY ITS A COP!
HIENEY! HIENEY! IT'S COPPERS! TH' DICKS!

THEN PLUNGES AHEAD AT BREAK-NECK SPEED, ROUNDING THE CURVES ON TWO WHEELS
DRIVE SLOW
E I'LL HAVE TO RUN THE GAUNTLET!


BUT A CAR HAS BEEN PARKED SQUARE IN THE EXIT, AND INSIDE CROUCHES HIENEY, MACHINE-GUN IN HAND
STOP THAT CAR OR I'LL BLOW YA TO CONFETTI!!!


INSTEAD OF SLOWING DOWN, BEN PRESSES THE ACCELERATOR TO THE FLOOR! THE CAR LEAPS FORWARD
CRASH!!


NEXT DAY AT THE HOSPITAL
W-W WHAT HAPPENED?
WHAT HAPPENED?!! ONLY THE WHOLE SCHWARTZ GANG ROUNDED UP! — ONE OF OUR PATROL CARS WAS NEARBY WHEN YOU CRASHED, AND MADE A COMPLETE SCOOP!


HIENEY'S IN THE NEXT ROOM WITH A FRACTURED JAW, SIX CRACKED RIBS AND A BROKEN ARM! — AND ALL YOU GOT OUT OF IT WAS A FEW CUTS AND BRUISES!! DOC SAYS IN TWO WEEKS YOU'LL BE GOOD AS NEW!! IF WE ONLY HAD MORE HALF-PINTS LIKE YOU ON THE FORCE, THERE'D BE NO CRIMINALS RUNNING AROUND LOOSE !!!
Jack Cole

From *Police Comics* #47, July 1945.

COSM
OUT OF THE PAST COMES A MENACE OF GIANT PROPORTIONS TO THREATEN THE LIFE OF EVERY MORTAL IN THE LAND!! IT REMAINS FOR GANGSTER EEL O'BRIAN ALIAS [redacted] TO FIGHT SINGLE-HANDED THE MOST VICIOUS BATTLE IN ALL HIS LONG CAREER OF CRIME FIGHTING!!
by JACK COLE
Lanilan 1642
PLASTIC MAN

From *Police Comics* #11, September 1942.

THIS MURDER IS PRACTICALLY SOLVED! A PRIZEFIGHTER COULD STRANGLE A MAN WITH HIS BARE HANDS EASILY ENOUGH! I'LL NAIL KAYO RANDY MYSELF!
WHAT'S THE PORTER!
WAKEFIELD BLDG
YOU'RE JOHN T. WALES, AREN'T YOU?
YOU'RE CRAZY! MY NAME'S CLEARY!
SURE! HAWKS SAID YOU WERE USING AN ASSUMED NAME! OOPS!
MISSED HIM!
BUT NOT FOR LONG!
6

From *Police Comics* #47, July 1945.

LOCK YOUR DOORS! DRAW THE SHADES! AND GRAB A PENCIL, DEAR READER! FOR YOU HAVE A DATE WITH MYSTERY!!! FOLLOW PLASTIC MAN AND HIS PAL, WOOZY WINKS, THROUGH THE MAZE OF MURDER, MAYHEM AND TERROR!... THIS IS A CONTEST BETWEEN YOU AND PLASTIC MAN! CAN YOU SOLVE THE CASE BEFORE HE DOES? THEN YOU HAVE THE MAKINGS OF A GOOD DETECTIVE!

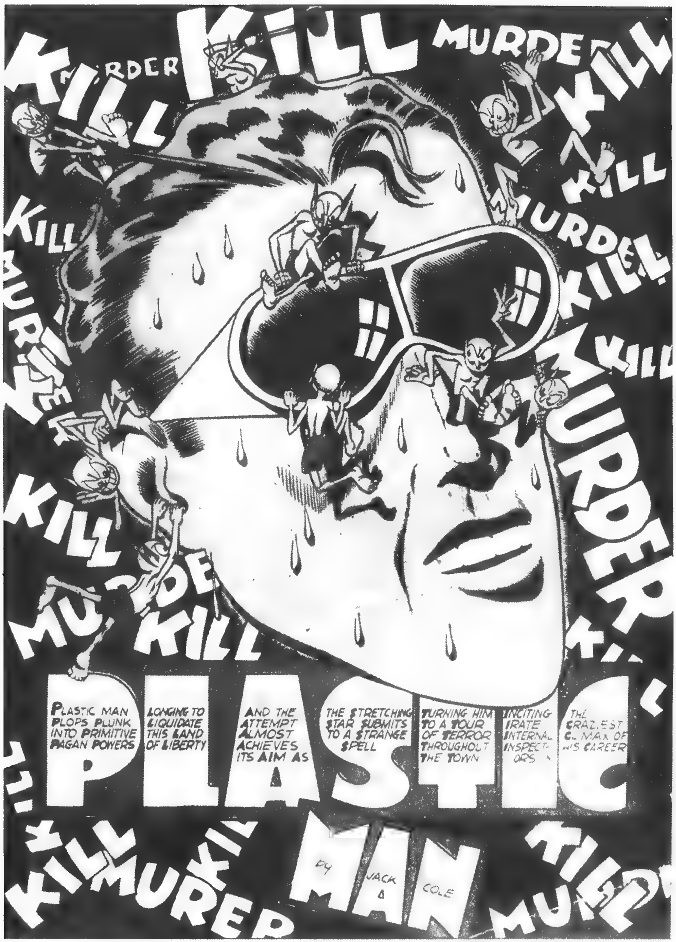
From *Police Comics* #17, March 1943.

WHOA!... COME BACK HERE!.. WE'VE GOT A JOB TO DO!
WOO WOOOO...
LEGGO! THE TRAIN'S HAUNTED, I TELL YA!!
PLASTIC MAN
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PLASTIC MAN AND WOOZY FIND THEMSELVES ON A HAUNTED TRAIN IN THE MIDST OF A GANG OF CUTTHROATS?... YOU GUESSED IT!.. BAM! BIFF! ZOWIE!

From *Police Comics* #23, October 1943.

BUT A COP COMES FROM BEHIND..
AH!
I GOT 'IM!!... I GOT 'IM!!
A FEW MINUTES OF STRUGGLE... THEN SLEEP....
I DESERVE A PROMOTION FOR THAT!!
GOOD BOY MIKE!
PHEW!
PLASTIC MAN STILL UNCONSCIOUS IS TAKEN TO POLICE HEADQUARTERS...
HOLD IT! GET A MIRROR MURPHY! THEN TAKE A LOOK!
YOU AGAIN?
APPEAR OH FATHER! YOUR SON VOWS A LIFE OF SHAME UNLESS YOU CLEAR THE INNOCENT NAME OF PLASTIC MAN!
HMP!
NO!.. YOU MUSTN'T! RATHER THAN SEE YOU DISGRACED I CONFESS MY GUILT! PLASTIC MAN IS INNOCENT!
13
WELL FOR--- HE'S GONE!
TO REST WITH HIS BODY FOREVER!
I KNEW PLAS WAS INNOCENT!
WELL FOLKS PLASTIC MAN IS STILL OUT... THE COPS ARE TOO DUMB— FOUNDED TO SPEAK. SO GUESS IT'S UP TO ME TO SAY SO LONG AND WE'LL SEE YOU NEXT MONTH!!

From *Police Comics* #16, February 1943.


KILL
MURDER
PLASTIC MAN PLOPS PLUNK INTO PRIMITIVE PAGAN POWERS
LONGING TO LIQUIDATE THIS LAND OF LIBERTY
AND THE ATTEMPT ALMOST ACHIEVES ITS AIM AS
THE STRETCHING STAR SUBMITS TO A STRANGE SPELL
TURNING HIM TO A TOUR OF TERROR THROUGHOUT THE TOWN
INCITING IRATE INTERNAL INSPECTORS
THE CRAZIEST C. MAX OF HIS CAREER
PLASTIC MAN
BY JACK COLE

From *Police Comics* #16, February 1943.

7

Will Eisner owned 50% of the Quality titles *National* and *Military* and also acted as editor of the two. In that capacity he hired Jack Cole to work for him. For *Military* Cole wrote and drew "Death Patrol." The star feature of the magazine was "Blackhawk" created by Eisner and Charles Cuidera. Though "Death Patrol" has been called an out-and-out parody of Blackhawk and his flying crew, that isn't the case. In the first place, Eisner says he came up with the idea and that the strip was intended as a variation not a burlesque. This was in keeping with Arnold's backup policy of "constantly pushing to get duplicate features." And Cole handled the strip in his best straight manner.

Had it been a spoof, it wouldn't have been so grim. The group comes by its name because in each early adventure one of them gets killed. It dealt with "five convicts and one, Del Van Dyne, former airline pilot, thrown together by fate. They fly to England and fight for the RAF! Acting independently, they become a foreign legion of the air: THE DEATH PATROL, most daring of all British warbirds!!" You'll notice that Cole manages to get reformed criminals into this one, too. While Arnold liked the feature he wasn't happy about characters getting bumped off each month. He later recalled that "I raised hell" and got the practice stopped.

Cole only turned out three episodes before relinquishing the feature to David Berg. This is the same Berg who now does the bland suburban stuff for *Mad*, and yet it isn't. Back then he had a loose, animated cartoon style that made his "Death Patrol" stories look like wild, hallucinatory Looney Tunes. After Berg, the Patrol took a vacation of several issues and then returned in #20. They returned as clowns pure and simple, playing everything for laughs. Cole returned, too, for a few more go-rounds, but never matched his earlier work.

For Eisner Cole also drew exactly one episode of "Quicksilver." His six-page job, drawn in his best detailed and inventive style, appeared in *National* #13 (July 1941). Quicksilver was a true second banana costumed hero, possessing no civilian identity, no secret origin, and nothing much in the way of superpowers. Dubbed the "Laughing Robin Hood," he got by on chutzpah and athletic prowess in his battles with the lawless. In the story Cole contributed, the nimble hero thwarts a gang that graduates from the poultry racket to the unlikely crime of trying to fix a motor boat race. Despite his lowly status, Quicksilver managed to have his escapades illustrated by several

From *Military Comics* #30, September, 1944.

© 1944 Quality Comics Group

HAHAHA!
BUT NOW TO RADIO HEADQUARTERS TO BE RELAYED TO THE NEW TOUREL GUNS!!
ANTI-AIRCRAFT!
BOOM!
SOON SHELLS ARE EXPLODING ALL AROUND
A TRAP! THAT DAMN'D SENT US RIGHT INTO A TRAP!
WHAT A SHAME WE'VE BEEN
BAM
BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!
BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!
BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

8

Some years after he'd left the comic-book field Busy Arnold was asked to name the feature he'd liked best among all those in his Quality magazines. "Although 'Blackhawk' was our top money maker," he replied, "'Plastic Man' was my personal favorite." That was some three decades after the start of *Police Comics*, though, and Arnold was looking back through all that had happened since. In the summer of 1941 Jack Cole's shape-changing good guy had been just one of the dozen strips and fillers making up the contents of the latest Quality newsstand entry. Plastic Man started in business, very modestly, in the middle of the first issue. In spite of the increasing popularity of Midnight over in *Smash Comics*, Cole's newest creation was not considered very important.

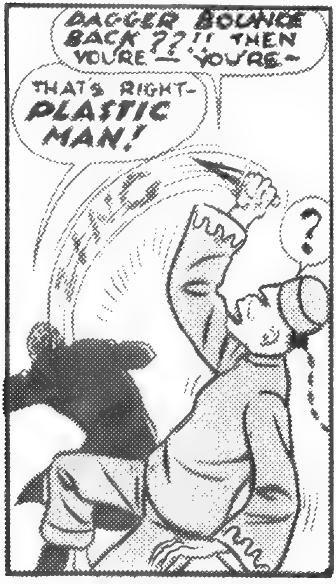
The intended money maker was "the mysterious figure who fights for justice as the Firebrand." He got the cover of the issue and an 11-page adventure in the front of the book. In civilian life the Firebrand was Rod Reilly, another of those millionaire playboys who turned to crimefighting because of the boredom of his ritz life. His costume consisted of scarlet tights, bandana, and mask, plus a shirt that seemed to be made of cellophane. When he's wearing this "flaming garb," he looks more like Gypsy violinist in a chichi restaurant than a practicing super-hero. Matter of fact, the Firebrand has no super powers at all and brings only blind courage and some acrobatic skills to the job.

What saved this Wall Street dogooder from being a complete dud was the artwork of the early adventures. The Firebrand artist for the first nine issues was the formidable Reed Crandall. A talented man and a master of anatomy, Crandall endowed the rather stodgy stories with more excitement and life than they actually deserved. I must add, though, that for me Crandall's work was always on the cold side. He lacked the flash and life of the top men who gave the real fire to the comic books of the early 1940s. Men like Jack Cole.

With Plastic Man Cole had a feature where he could make use of all the skills he'd been developing since hitting New York. His narratives mixed fantasy, cops and robbers, violence and humor. His drawing style, a blend of the straight approach and the exaggerations of animated cartoons, was idealy suited to depicting Plastic Man's bouncy gangbusting adventures. While the strip is sometimes referred to as a satire on other superguys, it wasn't really that at all. What Cole was turning out, in the first few years anyway,

From *Police Comics* #2, September 1941.

was closer to what was being done in the movies of the time. Studios like Warner Brothers were especially adept at combining mystery and comedy in films starring the likes of Edward G. Robinson, Pat O'Brien, and even Errol Flynn (*Footsteps In the Dark* is a mystery-comedy in which the dashing Flynn played a closet detective story



writer). MGM did well in the screwball-adventure category, too, as various films teaming Clark Gable and Jean Harlow or William Powell and Myrna Loy illustrate. These movies, and many others like them, proved you could successfully combine the elements and Cole succeeded in doing that sort of thing in comics.

Cole wrote his own blurb for the initial yarn, proclaiming, "From time to time the comic world welcomes a new sensation! Such is PLASTIC MAN!! The most fantastic man alive! Vermin of the underworld shudder at the mention of his name! And yet he was once one of them! Now, read of how this incredible character came to be!" Like other Jack Cole characters Plas is a reformed criminal. Eel O'Brian by name, "the toughest gangster afoot . . . wanted by the police in eight states." While involved in a safecracking caper at a chemical works, acid spills on him. Left to fend for himself by his gang ("Hey, ya putrid punks! Wait up!!"), he wanders out of the city, "through swamps, then up a mountain side." He passes out and awakens later to find he's been taken in and cared for by a kindly monk who runs a peaceful mountain retreat. The monks' faith in him causes Eel to reform on the spot. Shortly after that he realizes the acid bath has given him the ability to stretch his body into all sorts of shapes. "What a powerful weapon this would be . . . AGAINST CRIME! I've been FOR it long enough! Here's my chance to atone for all the evil I've done!!" The monastery sequence, excluding the fantasy elements, must've been inspired by what happened to Edward G. Robinson in *Brother Orchid* the year before. Taken for a ride by his own gang, Robinson is shot and left to die. Instead he manges to make his way to a monastery. He is taken in and cared for and, after some backsliding, reforms. Robinson had a whole movie to do it in; Eel had to make the transition from rat to good guy in six pages.

Over the next few months Plastic Man had some rather unusual adventures. He broke up a narcotics ring that was smuggling dope across the Canadian Border inside coffined corpses, tangled for two issues with a gang of lesbian racketeers ("Women of abnormal physical development bent on a city-wide protection shakedown") led by a cigar-smoking lady known as Madam Brawn. In their final showdown the madam assumes Plas won't lay a hand on her. "I never strike a lady," he admits. "But you're no lady!!" Promptly he punches her on the snoot, she falls back onto a spike, dead. At this time, issue #5, Plastic Man got his first cover on *Police*. He was drawn not by Cole, however, but by Gill Fox. Fox, who was associate editor and would soon graduate to editor, has told me that the Arnold practice at the time was to have the editor and associate editor do the covers on this title. Since Ed Cronin and Fox were both cartoonists, this worked out okay.

After Madam Brawn Plas destroyed a pair of evil-doing disembodied hands, outwitted a rather prosaic gang of jewel thieves, and then beat a mad scientist who was causing death and desolation with the giant eight ball he traveled across the countryside in. With issue #9 (May 1942) Plastic Man moved up to the front of the book and was given nine pages to cavort in. Arnold had found out, from newsstand response and reader letters, that it was Plastic Man and not Firebrand who was selling *Police Comics* and he acted accordingly. Inspired and elated by his promotion to the lead spot, Cole turned out his most complex and detailed job so far, in which Plastic Man tackles another mad scientist, a spider-like dwarf called Hairy Arms.

Part of the fun of Plastic Man was the disguises, the shape-changing he undertook in his pursuit of crooks and scoundrels. During his first few months on the job he transformed himself into,

AS THE MEN PILE OUT...
SWWWOOSH! MY STUMMICK!
WHO STEPS ON RAT #2 —
YAK!
SQUNK
HAC DROPS HIS GUN!... IT FIRES — GLANCES OFF A ROCK
WHO HIT'S RAT #3
OH!
AS JOHN & THE REST OF THE GANG SEE RAT #3 —
MY EYES!!
WHO LAUGHS OUT STOMPING RAT #4 —
HO KAWWAW! IT'S ME!!
GORSH... DID I DO THAT?
WHAT HAT
DID YOU!!
WHY, YOU'RE A HERO— CAPTURED THEM SINGLE HANDED!!
IMAGINE THAT!! MEBBE NOW THEY'LL LET ME ON THE FORCE!!
BUT DON'T THINK I'M A GLUTTON... I'M CUTTIN' YOU IN ON THE CREDIT TOO!
THAT'S RIGHT GENEROUS OF YOU!
BY THE WAY, WHAT KIND OF A DINGUS IS THIS??
IF YOU'LL KEEP IT A SECRET I'LL TELL YOU...
YES, YES GO ON!
WAIT, THERE MAY BE SPIES AMONG THE AUDIENCE
SORRY FOLKS, BUT TO REVEAL MILITARY SECRETS WOULD BE AIDING THE ENEMY!!!

Like Eisner's Spirit, Plastic Man wasn't always the one who saved the day. (From *Police Comics* #10, June 1942.)

among other things, a giant flying squirrel, a quivering junkie, a snake, a plump matron, a firehose, and a glamour girl. He also stretched, shrank, bounced, rolled like a hoop, and squeezed through keyholes. All the while he was also spying on the underworld as Eel O'Brian. In his redsuit-darkglasses phase Plas was allowed to work on the police force, but a source of constant frustration was the standing order to arrest and bring in Eel O'Brian. Cole never did figure out a way to resolve this dilemma and in the second year he simply dropped the dual identity.

With issue #11 the Spirit began appearing in *Police*, the monthly reprints of the weekly Sunday paper inserts. Eisner's masked man, already a proven winner, was going to provide some competition. Perhaps with this in mind, Cole did his most impressive story to date for that same issue. The splash page shows London in the 17th Century, with a coach and four rattling across a stone bridge in the foreground. Behind this looms the head of a giant who is ripping a building in half as Plastic Man comes stretching out of his gaping mouth to strike at him. The plot involves a scientist of 1642, suspected of being a warlock, who is destroyed by the gigantic ape he created. Buried, his brain does not die. "Years pass. . . . the brain lives on tho' all else rots. . . . Finally, all traces of his grave vanish." The undying brain swears, "Curse the world!! If ever I am freed from this living death, I'LL KILL EVERY MAN ALIVE!!"

The brain is freed in 1942 and transplanted into the skull of a gravely injured American Army

OH NO?!
EARTH QUAKE!!
WORSE THAN LOOK!
SO YOU TRICKED ME!! I'LL SWAT YOU LIKE A MOSQUITO!
NOW I'VE DONE IT
OH!! OH!!
AH!
OKAY YOU'VE GOT ME, IT'S YOU'RE MOVE!
SEE THE WORM BOUGHT THIS TIME I'LL MAKE SURE YOU DON'T ESCAPE!!
YEA, THIS TIME I'LL EAT YOU ALIVE!!!
DOWN, DOWN THE OESOPHAGUS CALLS PLASTIC MAN INTO HIS STOMACH!
UG! NOT A SOFT B... COULD BE WORSE... I'VE COME TO HAVE BEEN LIMBURGER!
MAYBE THIS'LL GIVE HIM THE HICCOUGHS AND HE'LL SNEEZE ME BACK UP!
GADZOOO!! THE DOPE'S TEARING MY INSIDES OUT!!
OW!
WATER!! I'LL DROWN THE INDIGEST IBLE WRETCH!!
A DELUGE OF WATER POURS IN ON PLASTIC MAN.....
NOW, WHAT? ???
SNAP

Plas was not the only Cole hero to be swallowed alive by a giant nemesis (*Police Comics* #11, September 1942). His Daredevil had been ingested by the towering Claw over in *Silver Streak Comics* the year before.

flyer. Although the body, crippled now, is that of young Tad Wilkins, it is controlled by the mind of the vengeful scientist. Back in the United States, he resumes his experiments and succeeds in turning himself into a giant. His fiancee summons Plastic Man and when he reaches the Wilkins home he finds both of Tad's parents crushed to death, their broken bodies sprawled in the imprints of gigantic hands. Since his gigantic body is crippled from the waist down, Tad is walking on his huge hands. He makes his wild way through the city, crushing and mangling everything he touches. Cole was able to take a basically ludicrous image, that of a man walking on his hands, and turn it into something frightening. After using the fiancee to lure Tad into a trap, Plastic Man is swallowed by the giant. "I'LL EAT YOU ALIVE!!" he roars. But Plas swells up inside him, cuts off his air and kills him. "In death, the giant changes to normal size and is laid to rest next to his parents. BUT . . ." We are then allowed to eavesdrop on what the still living brain is thinking. It vows that someday it'll "rise again to plague all the world!!"

The artwork on this episode is exceptional and there's an intensity Cole hadn't achieved before. The content, for a 1942 comic-book narrative, is unusual. Especially for a story written by an amiable, easygoing young fellow some people thought of as an overgrown Boy Scout. Gill Fox was editing the magazine by this time and he still remembers the impression this story made on him. "When I saw that first page, I knew Jack had arrived. There'd be no stopping him."

9

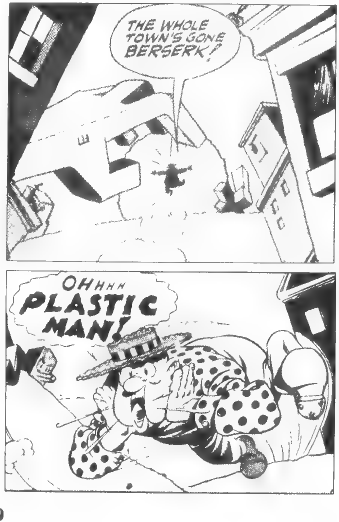
At the beginning of Plastic Man's second year Jack Cole gave him a sidekick. In Police #13 (November 1942) Woozy Winks, who looks something like the then-popular movie comedian Lou Costello, made his entrance. As a result of saving a wizard's life, Woozy is granted invulnerability and finds that nothing, from a bonk on the head with a hammer to a plunge off a high cliff, can harm him. The wizard's magic word, by the way, is "Shaddroe," indicating that Cole was following C.C. Beck's Captain Marvel. After using his gift of invulnerabilty to commit a few crimes Woozy, too, reforms and joins up with Plastic Man. From this point on the stories take on more humor. And fairly soon Plas ceases to work for the police and becomes an FBI agent instead.

The growing success of Plastic Man increased Cole's work load. With *Police* #17 he started drawing the covers, a task he kept for the next couple of years. The Plas stories were stretching, too, going from 11 pages to 13. By 1943 the adventures took up the first 15 pages of each issue. This meant Cole's India rubber man had more room than most any other super-hero of the era. Over in *Action* Superman had only 13 pages, likewise Batman in *Detective*. 1943 was also the year the first complete book of *Plastic Man* was issued. Cole wrote and drew four stories, a total of 54 pages, and also provided the cover. For new readers he prefaced the first yarn with some words about his flexible hero. "If you should see a man standing on the street and reaching into the top window of a sky-scraper . . . that's not astigmatism . . . it's PLASTIC MAN! . . . If you happen upon a gent all bent up like a pretzel don't dunk him . . . it's PLASTIC MAN! All this and bouncing, too, you'll see when the rubber man and his pal, WOOZY WINKS, gamble their lives in: The Game of Death."

This book was published not by Quality but by an outfit called Vital Books. Vital was actually a printer named Julian Proskauer. This was wartime, paper was rationed, and Proskauer happened to have a newsprint quota. Deciding he'd do better publishing comics and paperbacks than his usual fare, he went out and licensed Plastic Man, the Spirit, and Nick Carter. There was a second Plas magazine in 1944. Arnold took over and put out *Plastic Man* #3 in 1946.

The increased demands on Cole meant that he couldn't put as much time into each story as he once did. You'll notice, if you follow Plastic Man from, say, *Police* #13 through *Police* #24, that Cole keeps simplifying his work. The backgrounds become sparer, the shading and noodling all but vanish. His sense of design and his gift

From *Police Comics* #20 (July, 1943).



Another humorously autobiographical strip from *Police Comics* #2 (September 1941). Cole seemed to delight in portraying himself as a chinless buffoon.

for laying out a story smoothly and inventively remain, but less care is being taken. Cole also began having serious deadline problems. According to his brother Dick, there'd always been something of a problem. "Jack loved to procrastinate," he once recalled. "He would goof off most of the month then work night and day to get the work done. Mostly he would draw all night long."

In *Police* #20 (July 1943) you can actually see Jack Cole working away by night to meet his Plastic Man deadlines. He puts himself as a character into this odd dream fantasy story. Plas is incapacitated and Woozy decides to bring the guilty parties to justice. Needing an artist to draw portraits of the crooks, he decides to try hiring Cole for the job. After some dickering, Cole agrees to do the job for a buck in cash. He doesn't flatter himself in this particular self-portrait. He appears as a lanky, sharpnosed, and chinless chap with a pot belly. And, as noted earlier, he suffers from a severe stutter. At one point, when he and Woozy fall into the clutches of the bad guys, he's asked, "And who might you be?"

"I muh-MIGHT be Ga-Ga-GRETA Ga-Ga-GARBO, but I AM JACK COLE . . . Heh, heh."

"So what?"

"So I was b-bu-born in N-N-New Castle, P-Pa., on D-D-D-December 14, 1914. I'm twenty eight . . . M-m-my wife s-says I'M the buh-best c-c-c-c-cacartoonist afoot! P-p-p-publishers b-beg for MY s-services! I write MY own stories, t-too . . . I'M super! . . . I'M s-swell! I'M, I'M, I'M, I'M, etc. etc. . . ."

It's interesting to wonder if this is really how Cole thought of himself during the most successful period of his cartooning career so far.

Gill Fox, when he was editing *Police*, experienced difficulties with Cole's lateness. Arnold had moved the Quality offices to Stamford, Connecticut, which was nearer his home in Greenwich. Cole and his wife relocated in Stamford shortly thereafter. Fox often had to walk from the Gurley Building over to the Cole residence to nudge his friend into finishing a job. He especially remembers one such occasion. "Jack was renting the ground floor of a Victorian, a big house painted grey. I remember ringing the doorbell and there was a bow window on my right . . . . I kept ringing and knocking and nobody answered. And as I turned to go away, out of the corner of my eye I saw somebody watching me from behind the curtains. It was Jack . . . can't explain that. I was a friend of his, socially and otherwise, but he pretended not to be home because of that deadline."

Veteran cartoonist Creig Flessel, who became a close friend of Cole's, met him because of another missed deadline. Cole and his wife were living on Long Island at the time, in the middle 1940s, and Flessel got a phone call from Fred Guardineer. Guardineer was one of the Quality regulars and Arnold had phoned him because he was concerned about not being able to reach anyone at Cole's home. Guardineer suggested that, since Flessel lived a lot closer to Cole than he did, he go over and see what was wrong. Flessel obliged and discovered that Cole, seriously behind schedule, had simply taken the phone off the hook.

The increasing number of pages needed plus the growing deadline troubles precipitated a situation that upset Cole considerably. Busy Arnold decided to bring in other artists and writers to work on Plastic Man. Today it's a rare cartoonist who scripts, letters, pencils, and inks a job. Then it was more common and Cole prided himself on being able to do everything. He didn't like anyone else touching his work or having

WARNING!
PERISH, VERMIN!
KLOBBER YOU KNOW.
BANG!
OH, OH! HE'S FA...
PLASTIC MAN ENVELOPES HIS ASSAILANT IN MID AIR...
I WAN' YOU ALIVE!
HELP!
THUD
THANKS TOO MUCH
WHAT'S GRATITUDE? HOW'D YOU LIKE A BOOT IN THE BEAK?
DOWN!
EEYOW! YOU'RE CRUSHING ME DON'T
HOLD STILL WHILE I BREAK THE GOOD NEWS TO HICKEY
RE AH, YAH, WATAREW SCAH A DUMMY, COME ON CHAH, AH'LL SHEET THE GUY WHO CREATES
AH'LL SHEET YOU

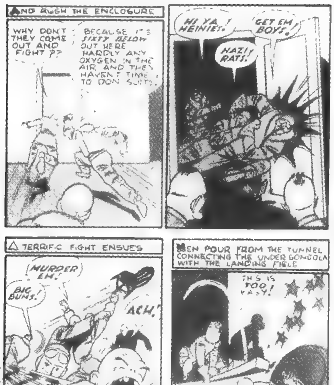
In this sequence from *Police Comics* #17 (March 1943), Cole deftly uses Plastic Man's malleability to lead the eye from panel to panel and tier to tier, making the flow of the story more natural and easier to follow.

anything to do with his characters. But like nearly all his contemporaries, with the exception of Eisner and a few others, Cole had no control over the strips he'd created. Plastic Man belonged to Arnold, as did Midnight, and all the rest. From a financial point of view Cole wasn't doing badly. He got the highest page rate around and bonuses of as much as $2500 every so often. Considering that he didn't own anything he did, he was thriving.

The first artist to fill in seems to have been Bart Tumey. An early contributor to DC, Tumey also did a lot of work for Quality. He was a good, if not overly imaginative, artist who had a pleasant, cartoony style. He began drawing stories in the *Plastic Man* comic book. By around 1947, although Cole was still doing many of the *Police* and *Plastic Man* covers, Arnold had a staff at work turning out imitation Cole. The best men to try their hand at this were Alex Kotzky and John Spranger. Kotzky had been in comics since 1940 and had done some excellent work on such Quality features as *Manhunter* and *Espionage*. He'd also worked for Eisner as an inker on the Spirit and had known Cole since 1942. They were friends and apparently Cole didn't resent his working on Plastic Man. Kotzky tells me he considered Jack Cole just about the best cartoonist in the business at the time. He studied his work, concentrated on drawing as much like him as he could when he was doing Plas. In Kotzky's opinion it was Spranger who did the best Cole imitations. Another grad of the Eisner Spirit works, Spranger did the *Saint* newspaper strip.

10

From *Military Comics* #31, September, 1943.


AND RUSH THE ENCLOSURE
WHY DON'T THEY COME OUT AND FIGHT ??
BECAUSE IT'S STAY BELOW OUT HERE HARDLY ANY OXYGEN IN THE AIR AND THEY HAVEN'T TRAINED TO DON SUITS
HI-YA, HEINIES!
GET 'EM BOYS!
HAZI RATS!
TERRIFIC FIGHT ENSUES
MURDER 'EM!
BIG GUNS!
ACH!
MEN POUR FROM THE TUNNEL CONNECTING THE UNDERGROUND WITH THE LANDING FIELD
THIS IS FOO! YA!
UG!
© 1944 Quality Comics Group

During the early 1940s, while Jack Cole was turning out relatively serious adventure and super-hero material, he was also drawing a good deal of out-and-out funny stuff. Most of it in the one-page filler category. For *Smash*, as already noted, there was "Wun Cloo." "Dan Tootin" ran in *Hit Comics*, "Windy Breeze" in *National*, "Slap Happy Pappy" in *Crack* and "Burp the Twerp" in *Police*. All of these were signed with his Ralph Jones penname.

Burp the Twerp, billed as the Super So-and-so, made his debut in the second issue of *Police Comics*. He was a super-hero, but an eccentric and bumbling one. He was bald, with a body like an overripe balloon, and a shaggy white moustache. Cole used Burp to poke fun at the army of more sobersided supermen who crowded the newsstands of the day, as well as to kid his own Plastic Man. In one typical interlude Burp attempts to enlist in the Army. He demonstrates some of his impressive abilities, explaining while he does, "I can shrink to two feet high . . . grow to 50 feet tall . . . pull myself into nothing . . . and expand to the size of an elephant." The recruiter rejects him, explaing, "You're too short . . . too tall . . . too thin and too fat!!"

Like Cole and Dickie Dean, Dan Tootin was an inventor, a wacky one in this case. Windy Breeze, as his name hinted, was a champion liar and teller of tall tales. Slap Happy Pappy, taken over from the drafted Fox, was another hillbilly strip. Besides these regular assignments, Cole also filled in on several other features. *Inkie* starred an animated cartoon sort of kid, a character who came alive off the artist's drawing board to have a six or eight-page comedy adventure. Cole drew him twice in 1944, in *Crack Comics* #33 and #34. He caricatures himself again, showing this time a weary, slumpshouldered fellow who can't come up with a single useable idea. Though his own stammer is gone, Cole does give his editor, George E. Brenner, a fetching lisp. For *Crack* #31 Cole concocted a two page filler entitled "Ike An' Dooit" which was a throwback to his earlier screwball period. Ike and Dooit, who look like a pair of blond Marx Brothers and behave like low-class cousins of the Three Stooges, run a store front business that promises to "do anything at a price." Cole was able to crowd nudity, cannibalism, and several horrendous puns into the thing, along with a panel-shaking belch. He drew this admirable strip but once.

For *Military Comics* during the same months he returned, under the Ralph Johns guise, to "Death Patrol." This was now a four-page burlesque adventure. He also turned out three episodes of

DAN TOP
EDGAR JOE MADE NOT BOOM ON THIS CROSS TO SHOW HIS LATEST PROJECT... A MACHINE THAT WORKS ITSELF!
SQUEE A-2... HERE'S A CUE FOR YOU TO SHOW OFF YOUR NEW GAG!
BOOM
HI GUY! WHAT DO YOU THINK?
DO YOU SEE HIM? NO! I'M GETTING WORRIED!
ANOTHER FALLS HE'S IN TROUBLE!
THEN ANOTHER AND ANOTHER AND ANOTHER
BEEP NO WONDER I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM! HE'S PERMITTED TODAY IS 10 YEARS!
I DON'T KNOW! I'LL GO LOOK!
AH, A NEW GAG! I WONDER WHAT IT IS!
TEN YEARS!
HOW ABOUT THAT! HE LOVES HIS WORK!
NO!
THERE HE GOES AGAIN!
© 1984 Quality Comics Group

From *Hit Comics* #10 (May 1941).

the Army farce, "Private Dogtag," in *Military* #s 29, 30, and 32. And, still in 1944, Cole drew two "Blimpy" yarns for *Feature*. Blimpy was a fat blue fellow in a fez, allegedly a Buddha statue who'd come to life. Cole's inspired opuses included mythological satyrs who run amok in the city, burlesque queens, crooked wrestlers, and a nice assortment of sexy ladies.

It's not clear why Cole, who was having continuing difficulties meeting his Plastic Man deadlines, took on all this extra work. You'll notice, though, that most everything he added to his schedule in 1944 was humorous.

Another chore Cole undertook in the early '40s was the ghosting of the daily *Spirit* newspaper strip. He wrote and drew a 12-week sequence that ran from May 18 through August 8 of 1942. The story involves Ebony, some black pool room frequenters and a ruthless lady villain named Fannie Ogre. After using a face cream invented by Ebony, the horrible Fannie becomes a dazzling beauty. She cons the Spirit into giving up crimefighting for a month and then exults, "Exit, Fannie Ogre . . enter CINDERELLA SINN into the SHORTEST, MOST LUCRATIVE CRIME CAREER IN HISTORY . . and when August rolls around, Fannie will return a MILLIONAIRE and the SPIRIT will be a CORPSE!"

Cole commenced his ghosting stint inking in a manner somewhat like Eisner. Within a few weeks he was himself again and, except for the presence of Ebony, you could've been following the daily adventures of Midnight.

The middle 1940s was a restless period for Cole. He and Dorothy moved back to Connecticut, then to Massachusetts. He'd take on a new feature, draw it for an issue or two, abandon it. The Barker, his last straight comic-book hero, was introduced in *National Comics* #42 (May 1944). This was an unusual feature, written by Joe Millard and not Cole, and dealt with Carnie Carnahan, a barker with Colonel Lane's Mammoth Circus, and the various other circus performers from the strongman to the midget. Since super-heroes were already on the wane, the Barker sees an attempt to introduce a different sort of character to comics. The feature, taken over by Klaus Nordling, proved to be a fair success. Cole drew it just once. In 1946, with the comic-book business converting to humor, crime, and other potentially saleable genres, Busy Arnold came forth with *All Humor Comics*. For the premiere issue Cole produced "Odd Jobs, Inc," a six page comedy-adventure about a chinless, sharp-nosed lad who ran a more sedate version of the business Ike and Dooit had tried. He stuck with this one for just one issue, too.

Next Cole turned again to true crime, producing some of his best work and also earning a choice spot in Dr. Fredric Wertham's Seduction of the Innocent.

Crack Comics #33, March 1943.

SOLD AMERICAN!
JEST THINK MA-A HUGE WAREHOUSE FILLED WITH BACON! ENOUGH TO FEED THE REST OF OUR BREATH!
THEY MEANS WHEN I GETS THERE I'S GOING TO A STORE AWAY!
NOW SEE HERE-SEE-DONE-SEE-HANDLE HOWAS AT BE
AND O GOMEN
AH'LL RUN AFOR THE HOUNDS AN WHERE THE FOOD'S AT BETTER AH FOLLER FER WHERE THE FOOD AIN'T
HELP! HELP! HELP!
LATER...
(PUFF) (PUFF) PLEE DID THEY GIT HERE YET MA?
YES... LES STAND HERE AND INHALE!
© 1984 Quality Comics Group

11

By turning his back on costumed heroes, Charles Biro had come up with the best-selling comic book in the World War II years. While working for publisher Lev Gleason, Biro, Bob Wood, and an editor-writer named Bill Kofoed had invented *Crime Does Not Pay*. The first issue hit the stands in the spring of 1942 and was numbered 22, because it replaced *Silver Streak Comics*, which had died with issue #21. What Biro and company had done was take a true detective magazine and convert it into a funny book, borrowing also from hit radio shows like *Gang Busters*. You'll recall that Jack Cole had done some of the earliest work in this category to appear in comics. In #24 Biro added a narrator to the lead story, a snide transparent chap called Mr. Crime. Looking a good deal like Mr. Coffee Nerves of the Sunday funnies Postum ads, he behaved in the gloating manner of radio's *Inner Sanctum* host Raymond. Artists like Creig Flessel, Dick Briefer, Bob Montana, and Bart Tumey worked on the first issues; Biro himself provided the brutal covers.

Many of the comic books of the war years had been growing increasingly violent and sexy. Fiction House led the way, followed by MLJ, Gleason and, eventually, a resurrected Fox Features. The main reason for this was that comic books were no longer selling to just kids. A chief reason for the enormous sales of comic books in wartime was the fact that they were bought in great quantities at Army camps, Navy bases, and so on.

Crime comics proved to be a very successful category even after the war. Dozens of publishers jumped on the bandwagon in the postwar years, even more conservative houses like DC and Fawcett. Gleason added *Crime and Punishment* to his list along with *Desperado*, chronicling crime out West. The restless Cole went to work for an outfit called Magazine House in the spring of 1947, hired to edit and draw for *True Crime Comics*. Cole's first story for the magazine was an intense, moody one titled *Murder, Morphine and Me* and dealt with a young blonde woman whose life was ruined by drugs and pushers. When Dr. Wertham's book arrived in the early 1950s, a panel from this story, showing a hypo needle being used to threaten the girl, "a sample of the injury-to-the-eye motif." The magazine lasted for a little more than a dozen issues and by the time it folded, in 1949, Cole was long gone. His deadline problems had continued with *True Crime*, even with Alex Kotzky helping out. Kotzky remembers he and Cole working all night to put together the first issue.

Jack Cole drew this self-portrait to go with a story in *The Berkshire Courier* in 1945.

© 1945 The Berkshire Courier

Cartoons from *The Playboy Cartoon Album*, 1963.

Jack Cole had never given up his desire to be a successful gag cartoonist. Many of his comic-book originals of those years had gag ideas roughed on the back. He apparently began making serious efforts to sell to magazines like the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's* from the middle 1940s on. This results in his abandoning Plastic Man for months at a time and doing, at most, an occasional cover for *Police*. Starting with *Smash Comics* #68 (December 1946), though, he returned to one of his other creations. He wrote, pencilled and inked most of the 11-page "Midnight" adventures from then until the magazine's demise in the fall of 1949 with issue #85. The tone of the strip had become considerably lighter while he was away and two less than serious new characters, a chubby deer-stalker-wearing private detective named Sniffer Snoop, and his pet baby polar bear, had been added. Cole's new stories, more simply drawn, dealt as much with poking fun at television, popular music, and other postwar foibles and fads as they did with crime and detection. He drew the majority of the magazine's covers during this period as well.

Police Comics switched to being a true crime book after its 102nd issue (October 1950) and Plastic Man lost one of his homes. Cole continued working for Arnold and even did some crime and horror stuff for new Quality titles like "Web of Evil." On this material, for the first time in his career, he allowed other artists to ink his pencilled pages. He quit comic books forever in 1954. He'd been discovered by another cartoonist, someone named Hugh Hefner, who'd recently started a magazine called *Playboy*.

12

"Middle of January the boss is moving us to Chicago. Swore I would never leave these old hills, but he's dangled so much green bait what're you going to do? The sad part is leaving old friends and just when we were getting reunited . . . But it's the biggest pile of eagle-shit that ever landed on us, so I'm gonna grab a fork and wade in." —Jack Cole, 1955

"He just went out and shot himself. Just like that." —Dorothy Portugais

Working out of his Chicago apartment, Hugh Hefner put together the first three issues of his new girlie magazine. According to Frank Brady's unauthorized biography of Hefner, *Playboy* "realized a profit from its very first issue." A cartoonist himself and a fan of *Plastic Man*, Hefner was delighted when Jack Cole submitted some gags to his fast-rising magazine. Very soon Cole, working out of his latest home in New Milford, Connecticut, was doing a "Females By Cole" panel in each issue of *Playboy*. There were often full page gags as well, done brightly in watercolor. Readers responded to his work, many of them who'd never heard of him or his comic book work, and the early letters pages are dotted with praise for Cole and his females.

Using the name Jake, Cole had been selling similar stuff to low-paying digest size humor magazines and this was a big step up for him. When, in 1955, Hefner suggested he relocate in the Chicago area so as to be near the magazine's editorial offices, Cole was less than enthusiastic. The money offered was very good and so he and Dorothy uprooted again, settling in Cary, Illinois. "Finally half-way settled in this pool table of a state," he wrote to a friend in late February of 1956. "After a near-month of hotels, house-hunting, moving and cleaning the New England flood-mud off the remains of our furniture, we're pooped with a capital terd! Bought a place about 40 miles from Chicago — that's as near as I want to be to the joint. Hef offered me a staff job but I prefer to work at home."

His success with *Playboy* continued. The "Females" were collected into a book, reprinted on cocktail napkins and otherwise merchandised. Cole was also assigned four and five page spreads in the magazine. He'd developed an impressive full-color watercolor technique and his pages stood out. He didn't miss the days with Quality. In fact, when Arnold had tried to hire him back Cole told him "that I was going to be the

From *Playboy*, July 1955.

best damn cartoonist" in the gag field. To one of his friends he wrote, "you are so right about the comic mags being for the birds."

Ray Russell was an editor at *Playboy* during those years. When I asked him about Cole, he replied, "I hardly knew him. None of us, except Hefner, hardly knew him. Hefner handled all cartoon stuff at the time, and I would occasionally see Jack arriving as I was going home, for an after-hours appointment with Hef, his portfolio of roughs under his arm. We would wave at each other, ships that pass in the night. . . The only conversation of any length I had with him was at a *Playboy* party, held at our offices just a month or two before he died. We both had glasses in our hands, and he did most of the talking. He asked me what techniques or devices *I* used, to come up with comic ideas. . . He also made a cryptic remark which, broadly paraphrased by my battered brain after a quarter-century or so, was something to the effect that if he ever relaxed his self-discipline, 'I could become an alcoholic.'"

Early in 1958 Cole had another of his longtime dreams come true. He sold a comic strip. Called *Betsy and Me*, it was drawn in a simple UPA-animation style and featured gags that were built mostly around the stupidity of its central character, the floorwalker Chester Tibbets, husband of Betsy. The Chicago Sun Times Syndicate, part of the Field empire, loved it and offered Cole a contract within a few days on his initial submission. Dorothy Portugais was an editor at the syndicate and she told me theirs was the first syndicate Cole had submitted his strip to. He'd simply walked in off the street one day, after a visit to *Playboy*, with about five or six weeks of pencilled strips and two or three finished ones. Nobody up there had ever heard of him and they didn't find out until after he was signed up that he was a veteran of nearly 20 years in comic books and one of *Playboy's* favored cartoonists. According to Dorothy Portugais the new strip was successful from the first and continued to pick up papers throughout its run. She saw Cole every week, had lunch with him on several occasions. She was fond of him and thought of him as a pleasant, easygoing sort of man.

On the morning of August 15th that year Cole went to a store in Cary to buy himself a .22 pistol. Getting back in the car, Cole drove for awhile. Then he stopped and shot himself in the head.

Cole supposedly left a note saying that no one was to blame for what he was doing.

When a longtime friend of his heard about this, he said, "That was typical of Jack. Not blaming anyone but himself."

From *Playboy*, July 1955.

1955 Playboy

From *Playboy*, July 1955.

© 1955 Playboy

CHECKLIST

By Lou Mougin

This index covers the Plastic Man stories published by Quality and Vital from 1940 to 1956. There are two additional sections which deal with Plastic Man reprints and provide a short checklist of DC Comics from 1966 to present featuring the character.

A qualification of sorts must be made at the outset. All the credits given after story titles are for *art only*, though we may assume that Jack Cole wrote most of the Plastic Man stories he drew. Not all non-Cole artists can be easily identified, and, since Quality artists were specifically told to mimic Cole's style when doing the strip, distinguishing Cole from an imitator can sometimes be difficult. The credits, in many cases, are our best guesses as to the artist's identity most of which are graciously supplied by experts Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr. and James Ware. Stories untitled in the original are supplied with titles in parentheses.

We wish to thank Jerry Bails for supplying the microfilms of *Police* and *Plastic Man*, and Don Rosa for lending several issues. Without their help this index would not have been possible.

Police Comics

1 Aug. 1941
Cover: Firebrand vs. two enemy soldiers at deck gun; vignettes of Plastic Man, Human Bomb, Phantom Lady and Mouthpiece (Gill Fox)
[The Origin of Plastic Man] (Cole) 6 pp.

2 Sept. 1941
Cover: Firebrand smashing crook with torch; vignettes of Plastic Man, 711, Mouthpiece and Human Bomb
["Dueling the Dope Smugglers] (Cole) 6 pp.

3 Oct. 1941
Cover: Firebrand stopping crook from blowtorching cop; vignettes of Plastic Man, Human Bomb, 711 and Mouthpiece
["The Pinball Racket] (Cole) 6 pp.

4 Nov. 1941
Cover: Firebrand dodging crook with axe; vignettes of Plastic Man, 711, Phantom Lady, Human Bomb and Eagle Evans
Crime School for Delinquent Girls (Cole) 6 pp.

5 Dec. 1941
Cover: Plastic Man emerging from keyhole of door to grab crook; vignettes of Firebrand, 711, Human Bomb and Chic Carter
[The Return of Madam Brawn] (Cole) 6 pp.

6 Jan. 1942
Cover: Plastic Man capturing crook; vignettes of Firebrand, Phantom Lady, Human Bomb, 711 and Mouthpiece
[The Case of the Disembodied Hands"] (Cole) 6 pp.

7 Feb. 1942
Cover: Plastic Man in gunfight with crooks; vignettes of Firebrand, Human Bomb, Phantom Lady, 711 and Chic Carter
[The United Crooks of America] (Cole) 6 pp.

8 Mar. 1942
Cover: Plastic Man dodging four crooks; vignettes of Firebrand, 711, Human Bomb, Phantom Lady, Mouthpiece
[The Sinister Eight Ball"] (Cole) 6 pp.

9 May 1942
Cover: Plastic Man stretching his head to butt crook in jaw; vignettes of 711, Human Bomb, Manhunter, Firebrand, Chic Carter
Satan's Son Sells Out to the Japs" (Cole) 9 pp.

10 July 1942
Cover: Plastic Man running through street with gang of crooks in tow; vignettes of Firebrand, 711, Phantom Lady, Manhunter and Human Bomb
["The Cyclop Caper] (Cole) 9 pp.

11 Sept. 1942
Cover: Plastic Man emerging from test tube to spit on Tad Wilkins; vignettes of The Spirit, Manhunter, 711, Chic Carter and Human Bomb
[The Brain of Cyrus Smythe"] (Cole) 9 pp.

12 Oct. 1942
Cover: Plastic Man using mirror to help him clobber crook behind him; vignettes of The Spirit, 711, Manhunter, Human Bomb and Chic Carter
[The Sinister Swami"] (Cole?) 9 pp.

13 Nov. 1942
Cover: Plastic Man chased by kids for rubber salvage collection; vignettes of The Spirit, Manhunter, Chic Carter, 711, and Human Bomb
" Presenting the Man Who Can't Be Harmed" (Cole) 9 pp.

14 Dec. 1942
Cover: Plastic Man vs. crook; vignettes of Spirit, Manhunter, 711, Chic Carter, Human Bomb
Oh, Plastic Man" (Cole) 13 pp.

15 Jan. 1943
Cover: Plastic Man (three vignettes) and The Spirit
["The Weather Weapon"] (Cole) 13 pp.

16 Feb. 1943
Cover: Plastic Man with two wound-up crooks in his arm; Woozy Winks and The Spirit
["The Revenge of Chief Great Warrior"] (Cole) 13 pp.

17 Mar. 1943
Cover: Plastic Man stuffing peace pipe into Indian Chief's mouth; Spirit vignette
["Murder in Maniac Mansion"] (Cole) 13 pp.

18 Apr. 1943
Cover: Plastic Man-as-cobra and Spirit playing snake-charmer flute
["The Drafting of Plastic Man"] (Cole) 13 pp.

19 May. 1943
Cover: Gun blazing at Platic Man; vignettes of The Spirit and Ebony
"The Forest of Fear" (Cole) 15 pp.

20 July 1943
Cover: Plastic Man letting his many faces fall from horn of plenty; Spirit vignette
"Woozy Winks Detective Agency (Cole) 15 pp

21 Aug. 1943
Cover: Spirit watching hand with knife emerge from door to stab Plastic Man in back
["The Menace of Serpina"] (Cole) 15 pp.

22 Sept. 1943
Cover: Plastic Man slugging Sphinx with both hands; Spirit vignette (Jack Cole)
"The Eyes Have it (Cole) 15 pp.

23 Oct. 1943
Cover: Plastic Man-as-question mark and Spirit examining corpse on railroad tracks (Jack Cole)
["The Ghost Train"] (Cole) 15 pp.

24 Nov. 1943
Cover: Plastic Man emerging from crook's gun to poke out his eyes (Jack Cole)
["The Hundred Plastic Men"] (Cole) 15 pp

25 Dec. 1943
Cover: Woozy reading book and visualizing Plastic Man fighting crooks (Jack Cole [signed])
"The Rare Edition Murders (Cole) 15 pp.

26 Jan. 1944
Cover: Plastic Man stopping Pike Ronan from drowning Vida (Jack Cole [signed])
[Body, Mind and Soul"] (Cole) 15 pp.

27 Feb. 1944
Cover: Plastic Man-as-lampost, Woozy attacked by crook, Spirit in gutter (Jack Cole)
[Woozy Winks Juror"] (Cole) 15 pp.

28 Mar. 1944
Cover: Spirit watching Plastic Man ride 'CRIME' horse (Jack Cole)
["Plastic Man—The Movie"] (Cole) 15 pp.

29 Apr. 1944
Cover: Crook laughing at Plastic Man while other crook flees
["Death in Berlin's Castle"] (Cole) 15 pp.

30 May 1944
Cover: Goole Loule strangling Woozy, as reflected in lenses of Plastic Man's sunglasses
["Blinky Winks and Gooie Louie"] (Cole) 15 pp

31 June 1944
Cover: Woozy juggling Plastic Man with his feet (Jack Cole [signed])
["The Mangler's Slaughter Clinic "] (Cole) 15 pp.

32 July 1944
Cover: Plastic Man-as-target
["The La Cucaracha Caper"] (Cole) 15 pp.

33 Aug. 1944
Cover: Plastic Man's head stretching through clouds (Al Bryant signed)
["Deathtrap for Plastic Man"] (Cole) 15 pp.

34 Sept. 1944
Cover: Plastic Man caging Woozy with his fingers
[Serena Sloop's Society For the Prevention of Cruelty to Criminals"] (Cole) 15 pp.

351 Oct. 1944
Cover: Woozy and Plastic Man
[The Confession of Froggy Fink"] (Cole) 15 pp.

36 Nov. 1944
Cover: Plastic Man swinging Woozy into Dr. Brann (Jack Cole [signed])
"Dr Brann's Health Farm (Cole) 15 pp.

37 Dec. 1944
Cover: Plastic Man with whip, making Woozy jump through hoop (Jack Cole [signed])
[Love Comes to Woozy "] (Cole) 15 pp.

38 Jan. 1945
Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy bursting through cover (Jack Cole [signed])
[One Million Dollars For Plastic Man's Death"] (Cole) 15 pp.

39 Feb. 1945
Cover: Woozy pursued by crook with knife under Plastic Man's elongated legs (Jack Cole [signed])
["His Lordship Woozy Winks"] (Cole) 15 pp.

40 Mar. 1945
Cover: Plastic Man-as-parachute lowering Woozy (Jack Cole)
["The Overalls in Mrs. Murphy's Chowder"] (Cole) 15 pp.

41 Apr. 1945
Cover: Plastic Man knocking crook over Woozy's back (Jack Cole [signed])
["Louie the Lift"] (Cole) 15 pp.

42 May 1945
Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy as two halves of horse costume (Jack Cole [signed])
["The Diabolical Dr. Dratt"] (Cole) 15 pp.

43 June 1945
Cover: Plastic Man surrounded by five faces of Woozy (Jack Cole)
["Arctic Circle Adventure"] (Cole) 15 pp.

44 July 1945
Cover: Woozy inflating Plastic Man-as-rubber raft on ocean while swordfish approaches underneath (Jack Cole [signed])
["Murder at the Home for the Aged"] (Cole) 15 pp.

45 Aug. 1945
Cover: Plastic Man-as-roller coaster giving rides to kids while Woozy takes tickets (Jack Cole [signed])
["Chief Rain-in-the-Trap"] (Cole) 15 pp.

46 Sept. 1945
Cover: Woozy-as-Boy Scout practicing knot-tying on Plastic Man (Jack Cole [signed])
["The Owl's Witches Union"] (Cole/Andre LeBlanc) 15 pp.

47 Oct. 1945
Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy racing (Jack Cole [signed])
["Slicer and Doser's Medical School"] (Cole) 16 pp.

48 Nov. 1945
Cover: Plastic Man blowing Woozy-bubble through pipe (Jack Cole [signed])
["The City of the Future"] (Cole) 15 pp.

49 Dec. 1945
Cover: Woozy dribbling Plastic Man-as-basketball (Jack Cole)
["Thelma Twittle, Super-Charmer"] (Cole) 15 pp.

50 Jan. 1946
Cover: Plastic Man whirling crook into Woozy's fist (Jack Cole?)
["Roget the Astrologer"] (Cole?) 15 pp.

51 Feb. 1946
Cover: Woozy riding Plastic Man-as-sled down snowy hillside (Jack Cole)
"The Granite Lady" (Cole/Alex Kotzky?) 15 pp.

52 Mar. 1946
Cover: Plastic Man-as-tent shielding Woozy from rain (Jack Cole)
["Crime Without Criminals"] (Cole) 15 pp.

53 Apr. 1946
Cover: Woozy holding on to Plastic Man-as-windbreak (Jack Cole)
["The Evil Genius of Dr. Erudite"] (Cole) 15 pp.

54 May 1946
Cover: Woozy pushing Plastic Man over letters "CRIME" (Jack Cole)
["The Thinking Machine"] (LeBlanc?) 15 pp.

55 June 1946
Cover: Woozy fishing on "rubber raft" Plastic Man (Jack Cole)
["Sleepy Eyes"] (Cole/Bart Tumey?) 15 pp.

56 July 1946
Cover: Woozy walking Plastic Man-as-tightrope (Jack Cole)
"Overworked Genie" (Cole?/LeBlanc?) 15 pp.

57 Aug. 1946
Cover: Plastic Man-as-Jack-in-the-box surprising Woozy (Jack Cole)
["The Mystery of Mr. Misfit"] (Cole?/John Spranger?) 15 pp.

58 Sept. 1946
Cover: Woozy playing "hoop-and-stick" with Plastic Man-as-hoop (Jack Cole)
"The Green Terror" (Cole?/Kotzky?) 156 pp.

59 Oct. 1946
Cover: Woozy flying Plastic Man-as-kite (Jack Cole)
["The Menace of Mr. Happiness"] (Cole?/LeBlanc?) 15 pp.

60 Nov. 1946
Cover: Professor Spindrift chasing Woozy over Plastic Man-as-bridge (Jack Cole?)
"Professor Spindrift Built Himself a Body" (Cole/LeBlanc?) 15 pp.

61 Dec. 1946
Cover: Plastic Man caging baby, Gasper Geetus and Woozy with his fingers (Jack Cole?)
["A Bundle of Trouble"] (Cole?/LeBlanc?) 15 pp.

62 Jan. 1947
Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy
"The Cupid's Bow Murder" 15 pp.

63 Feb. 1947
Cover: Woozy, Chief Branner and Plastic Man in Chief Branner's pipe (Jack Cole)
"The Crab" 6 pp.

64 Mar. 1947
Cover: Woozy firing Plastic Man-as-bow-and-arrow at crook with target on his backside (Jack Cole [signed])
"Candy in Crime" (Cole) 15 pp.

65 Apr. 1947
Cover: Woozy ringing Plastic Man-as-"test your strength" bell
"The Apartment of Dr. Phobia" (Cole) 16 pp.

66 May 1947
Cover: Plastic Man-as-heart encircling Woozy and Beauteous Bessie (Jack Cole [signed])
"Beauteous Bessie" (Kotzky?) 15 pp.

67 June 1947
Cover: Woozy clipping sleeping Plastic Man's hair to sell as rubber bands to kid (Jack Cole [signed])
["The Gag Man"] (Cole/Kotzky?) 15 pp.

68 July 1947
Cover: Plastic Man-as-spiderweb entangling crooks, Woozy with flit gun (Jack Cole [signed])
["Plas Goes to Hollywood"] (Cole?) 13 pp.

69 Aug. 1947
Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy at carnival in stretching duel with Stretcho (Jack Cole)
["Stretcho the India Rubber Man"] (Cole) 15 pp.

70 Sept. 1947
Cover: Plastic Man elongating tongue to lick Woozy's sucker while Woozy reads a book (Jack Cole?)
["The Top Hat's Tale"] (Kotzky?) 15 pp.

71 Oct. 1947
Cover: Woozy watching crook pound Plastic Man's head into his chest with mallet (Jack Cole?)
"East Is Easy and West Is West" (Kotzky?) 15 pp.
"On Ice" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.

72 Nov. 1947
Cover: Woozy turning away while nurse and two doctor inflate Plastic Man with bicycle pump and patch him (Alex Kotzky?)
["Mr. Cat"] (Cole?/Kotzky?) 15 pp.

73 Dec. 1947
Cover: Woozy using Plastic Man-as-bellows to blow over crooks (Jack Cole [signed])
["The Man Called Remember"] (Kotzky?/Bill Ward) 15 pp.

"The Balloon Man (Plastic Man text story) (Cole?/Ward) 2 pp.

74 Jan. 1948

Cover: Woozy riding Plastic Man-as-plane to attack Professor Dimwitt with beanshooter (Jack Cole [signed])

"The Danger of the Dimwitts"	(Cole?/Ward)	15 pp.
"In a Cow's Foot" (Plastic Man text story)		2 pp.

75 Feb. 1948

Cover: Woozy using Plastic Man for accordion (Jack Cole [signed])

"Case of the Ancient Clues"]	(Cole)	15 pp.
"The Sea Serpent" (Plastic Man text story)		2 pp.

76 Mar. 1948

Cover: Woozy riding Plastic Man's enlarged head in pursuit of crooks (Jack Cole?)

["The Melancholy Mr. Morbid"]	(Cole)	15 pp.
"The Mine with the Black Door" (Plastic Man text story)		2 pp.

77 Apr. 1948

Cover. Plastic Man forming Plastic Man and Woozy silhouettes with his arms (Alex Kotzky?)

["The Sinister Skullface"]	(Cole/Kotzky?)	15 pp.
"The Glorious Leap" (Plastic Man text story)		2 pp.

78 May 1948

Cover: Plastic Man-as-fire net catching Woozy in dive from burning building (Jack Cole/Alex Kotzky?)

"The Dictator of Dreams" (Cole/Kotzky?)	15 pp.
"The Rubber Man Does Some Rubbing" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

79 June 1948

Cover: Plastic Man preventing Eaglebeak from running over Woozy (Jack Cole?)

"Eaglebeak" (Cole?/Kotzky?)	15 pp.
"The Witch Doctor" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

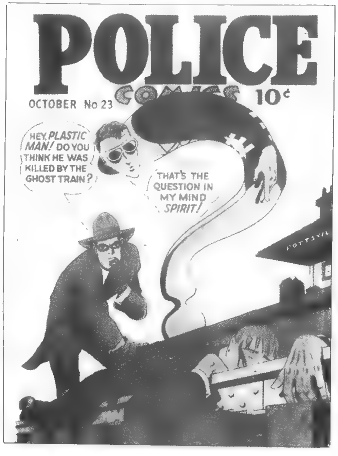
80 July 1948

Cover: Crowd watching Plastic Man play tennis against himself while Woozy keeps score (Jack Cole?)

"The Power of Penetro"]	(Kotzky?/Ward?)	15 pp.
"The Shark Gods" (Plastic Man text story)		2 pp.

81 Aug. 1948

Cover: Plastic Man-as-ball attacking Gargantua attacking Woozy (Jack Cole?)


POLICE
COMICS
OCTOBER No 23
10¢
HEY, PLASTIC MAN! DO YOU THINK HE WAS KILLED BY THE GHOST TRAIN?
THAT'S THE QUESTION IN MY MIND SPIRIT!

"Gargantua, the Phi Beta Gorilla" (Kotzky?/Ward?) 15 pp.
"Boomerang" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.

82 Sept. 1948

Cover: Plastic Man with motorcyle cops reflecting Woozy being chased by crooks in his sunglass lenses)

"A Three-Way Stretch For Plastic Man" (Cole/Ward?)	15 pp.
"Bomb on Board" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

83 Oct. 1948

Cover: Woozy held captive by crooks, Plastic Man-as-sword uncrowning King of Crime (Jack Cole?)

["The King of Crime"] (Cole)	15 pp.
"The Secret Dungeon" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

84 Nov. 1948

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy trapping Lucky Seven with giant dice (Jack Cole/Alex Kotzky?)

["Lucky Seven"] (Cole)	15 pp.
"Suspicious Character" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

85 Dec. 1948

Cover: Plastic Man-as-birthday cake carried by Woozy into lair of The Baker (Jack Cole/Alex Kotzky?)

["The Baker's Recipe For Murder" (Cole?/Kotzky?)	15 pp.
"Woozy's Secret Weapon" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

86 Jan. 1949

Cover: Woozy and Plastic Man-as-roulette wheel juggling crooks (Alex Kotzky?)

["The Plastic Man-Woozy Winks Split"] (Cole/Ward?)	15 pp.
"Magician" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

87 Feb. 1949

Cover: Woozy and Plastic Man hauling Phonie Le Ghoum off stage (Jack Cole)

"Mystery in the French Quarter"] (Cole/Kotzky or Ward?)	15 pp.
Woozy's Unquenchable Thirst" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

88 Mar. 1949

Cover: Woozy and Plastic Man vs. Seer and Fingers (Jack Cole)

"Predictions of The Seer"] (LeBlanc?/Kotzky?)	15 pp.
"The Rodeo" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

89 Apr. 1949

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy drawing Panhandle backwards with magnet on money sack (Jack Cole/Alex Kotzky?)

["No One Can Stop the Vanishers"] (Kotzky?)	15 pp.
"Poor Fish" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

90 May 1949

Cover: Woozy polishing Plastic Man-as-cannon while Captain Rivers looks on

"The Piracy of Captain Rivers"] (Cole)	15 pp.
"Stolen Ride" (Plastic Man text story)	1 pp.

91 June 1949

Cover: Plastic Man, Woozy, scouts and crook on nature hike (Alex Kotzky?)

"The Forest Primeval"] (Kotzky)	15 pp.
"Follow the Leader" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

92 July 1949

Cover: Plastic Man peeling covering from fake house while Woozy takes bath inside, nabbing Closets Kennedy and Biscuits (Jack Cole?/Alex Kotzky?)

"The Housing Racket of Closets Kennedy"] (Cole)	15 pp.
"Ransom For Woozy" (Plastic Man text story)	1 pp.

93 Aug. 1949

Cover. Plastic Man eating dinner with two Woozies and two Dr. Ameebas (Jack Cole?/Alex Kotzky?)

["Dr. Ameeba, the Twinning Terror"] (Cole)	15 pp.
"Where's Plas?" (Plastic Man text story)	1 pp.

94 Sept. 1949

Cover: Crooks restraining Plastic Man and Woozy in courtroom as Flanker pleads case (Jack Cole?/Alex Kotzky?)

"Plastic Man Turns Killer" (Cole)	11 pp.
"Actions Beat Words" (Plastic Man text story)	1 pp.

95 Oct. 1949

Cover: Woozy and Plastic Man looking at Scowls through magnifying glass (Jack Cole/Alex Kotzky?)

"Wanted Dead, Not Alive: Plastic Man" (Cole)	11 pp.
"The Long Stretch" (Plastic Man text story)	1 pp.

96 Nov. 1949

Cover: Black Widow and two crooks watch Plastic Man and Woozy in crystal ball (Alex Kotzky?)

"The Black Widow" (Kotzky?)	11 pp.
"Plastic Man-Trap" (Plastic Man text story)	1 pp.

97 Dec. 1949

Cover: Woozy in dressing room watching Mime standing on Plastic Man-as-rug, display Plastic Man costume (Jack Cole?/Alex Kotzky?)

["Mime, Master of Makeup"] (Kotzky?)	11 pp.
"Loaded Shell" (Plastic Man text story)	1 pp.

98 Feb. 1950

Cover: Plastic Man in suit of armor with Refine other crooks and Woozy at Yore Acres mansion (Alex Kotsky)

["Yesterday Yore"] (Kotzky)	11 pp.
"Where Is Plastic Man" (Plastic Man text story)	1 pp.

99 Apr. 1950

Cover: Needles Noggle using Plastic Man's finger as thread to sew Woozy under a spotted carpet (Alex Kotzky?)

["Needles Noggle's Seamy Career"] (Kotzky?)	11 pp.
"The Sealed Room" (Plastic Man text story)	1 pp.

100 June 1950

Cover: Thrilla vs. Woozy and Plastic Man (Kotzky?)

["Thrilla the Electrifying Crime Queen"] (Cole)	11 pp
"The Reach of Plastic Man" (Plastic Man text story)	1 pp.

101 Aug. 1950

Cover: Plastic Man-as-covered wagon chasing Woozy

["The Strangest Mistake Ever Recorded in Time"]	11 pp.
"Tottering Genius" (Plastic Man text story)	1 pp.

102 Oct. 1950

Cover: Plastic Man restraining Woozy from picking up money on street spying on crooks behind wall

["The Cold-Blooded Counterfeiter"]	13 pp.
"Trap For Trappers" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.

PLASTIC MAN

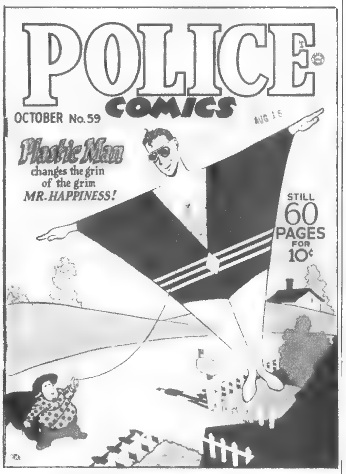
1 1943

Cover: Plastic Man grabbing crooks from within giant skull (Jack Cole)

"The Game of Death" (Cole)	12 pp.
"The Camouflaging Device" (Cole)	15 pp.
"Willie the Goon"(Cole)	12 pp.
"Bronty Green, Public Enemy Number One (Cole)	12 pp.
"Go West, Young Plastic Man" (Cole)	13 pp.

2 Aug. 1944

Cover. Plastic Man and Woozy Winks in Gay Nineties dress (Jack Cole [signed])



"The Gay Nineties Nightmare" (Cole)	15 pp.
["The Man Who Could Switch Bodies"] (Cole)	13 pp.
["The Lava Man"] (Cole)	13 pp.
["Coroner's Corners"] (Cole)	15 pp.

3 Spring 1946

Cover: Plastic Man, Woozy and Kayo Randy skipping rope with Plas's arm (Jack Cole)

["The Killing of Snoopy Hawks"] (Cole)	12 pp.
Fuzzy (Cole as "Ralph Johns")	1 pp.
"B.T. Tokus and the Witch Doctors"(Cole)	11 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Escape of Smelly Pitts"] (Cole)	6 pp.
Jonesy (Bernard Dibble)	1 pp.
"The Hand Beyond" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.
Cuthbert (Cole as "Ralph Johns")	1 pp.
["A Whale of a Tale: or, The Ambergris Caper"] (Cole)	14 pp.

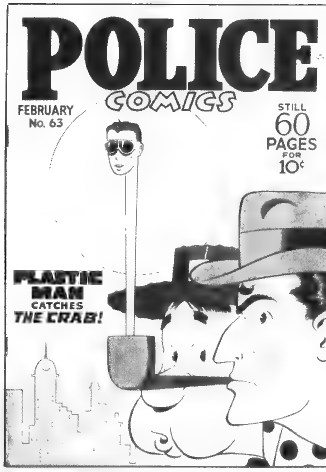
4 Summer 1946

Cover: Plastic Man-as-awning, catching falling Woozy (Jack Cole)

"The Purple Viking"] (Bart Tumey)	12 pp.
"King Lughead, the First" (Spranger?)	11 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Lollipop Caper"] (Tumey)	8 pp.
"Plas To Meet You" (Plastic Man text story)	2 pp.
Fuzzy (Cole)	1 pp.
"The Lobster"	14 pp.

5 Autumn 1946

Cover: Woozy riding Plastic-Man-as-beach toy on water (Jack Cole)



"The Called Him Weapons" (Cole) 12 pp.
["The Mysterious Being Called Hate"] (Cole/Kotzky?) 12 pp.
Woozy Winks ("Robin Hood Returns") (Cole) 8 pp.
"Snig River" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
Fuzzy (Cole) 1 pp.
["The Evil Money of Moneybags"] (Cole) 14 pp.

6 Winter 1947

Cover: Plastic Man circling Woozy's face with arms (Jack Cole)
"The Moon Wizard" (Cole) 12 pp.
["The Crimes of Mother Goose"] (Cole?) 11 pp.
Woozy Winks ("The Zwill Cat") (Cole/Kotzky?) 8 pp.
"Starrett Goes Straight" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
["The Grasshopper"] (Cole/Kotzky?) 14 pp.
Fuzzy (Cole) 1 pp.

7 Spring 1947

Cover: Plastic Man as lightning bolt hitting crook, Woozy with lightning rods (Jack Cole)
["The Evil Dr. Volt"] (Spranger?) 12 pp.
"One-Way Voyage of Villainy" 11 pp.
Woozy Winks ("Professor Rudy's Mind Training Course") (Cole) 8 pp.
"The Glass Planet" (text) 2 pp.
["The Billboard's Tale"] (Cole) 14 pp.
Fuzzy (Cole) 1 pp.

8 Summer 1947

Cover: Plastic Man wound around crook. Woozy with rope
"The Hot Rod" 12 pp.
["Concerto For Murder"] (Cole) 11 pp.
Woozy Winks ("The Mystery Paint") (Spranger) 8 pp.
"Doomsby's Doom" (text) 2 pp.
["The Homeliest Man in the World"] 14 pp.

9 Autumn 1947

Cover: Woozy using Plastic Man as a garden hose (Jack Cole)
"The King of Zing" (Cole) 12 pp.
"Case of the Counterfeit Counterfeit" (Cole/Spranger?) 11 pp.
Woozy Winks ("Hillbilly Purgatory") (Kotzky?) 8 pp.
"Paint Hides a Killer" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
"Cauldron" (Cole/Kotzky?) 14 pp.

10 Winter 1947-48

Cover: Woozy as referee. Plastic Man lined up against criminal football team (Jack Cole)
["All Krim"] (Cole/Spranger?) 12 pp.
["Gangster's Vacation"] (Cole/Kotzky?) 11 pp.
Woozy Winks ("The Ballet Caper") (Cole?) 8 pp.
"A-Hunting Woozy Goes" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
["The Evil Elektra"] (Cole?/Spranger?) 14 pp.

11 Spring 1948

Cover: Plastic Man as balloon in parade (Jack Cole)
["Robber Barron"] 12 pp.
"Bubble Gum" 11 pp.
Woozy Winks ("Stand-In For Cullen Sark") (Kotzky?) 8 pp.
"The Fat Man" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
[The Treasureville Swindle"] (Kotzky?) 14 pp.

12 July 1948

Cover: Spadehead with steam shovel vs. Plastic Man and Woozy (Jack Cole?)
["Spadehead"] (Cole/Spranger?) 12 pp.
"Riverman" (Cole/LeBlanc?) 11 pp.
Woozy Winks "Dr. Screwball's Backward Brew" (Bart Tumey?) 8 pp.
"Fire Sign" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
["Horseface"] (Cole/Tumey?) 14 pp.

13 Sept. 1948

Cover: Plastic Man-as-target trapping Mr. Hazard and other crooks. Woozy throwing tomatoes (Jack Cole)
["Mister Hazard"] (Cole/Kotzky?) 12 pp.
["The Man Called Jets"] (Cole) 11 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Evil Art School"] (Cole /Tumey? 8 pp.
"Steeplejack Dope" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
"Artifice" (Cole/Spranger?)

14 Nov. 1948

Cover: Woozy and Plastic Man as Crime Dictionary vs. Words and other crooks (Jack Cole)
["Words]" (Cole?/LeBlanc?) 12 pp.
"A Hard Guy Called Concrete" (Cole/Kotzky?) 11 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Walking Atomic Bomb"] (Tumey?) 8 pp.
"Restful Vacation" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
["Bloodhound Bud Bickram"] (Cole) 14 pp.

15 Jan. 1949

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy vs. Beau Crummel in helicopter (John Spranger?)
[Romany Rita and Beau Crummel"] (Cole/Spranger?) 12 pp.
["The Amazing Romanov"] (Cole/Kotzky?) 11 pp.
Woozy Winks "Woozy Winks, Commander in Chief" (Tumey) 8 pp.
"Plastic Man Snaps Back" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
["The World Againsters"] (Cole/Kotzky?) 14 pp.

16 Mar. 1949

Cover: Plastic Man, Woozy and Gazelle Van Gonder (Jack Cole)
["Gazelle Van Gonder"] (Cole/Spranger?) 12 pp.
["Say It Ain't So, Plas"] (Cole/Kotzky?) 11 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Tomb of Tut-Da-Mutt"] (Cole/Ward?) 8 pp.
Charges Reversed" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
["Ali Babass and the Four Thieves"] (Cole/Spranger?) 14 pp.

17 May 1949

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy pulled over Earth by spacecraft (John Spranger?)
["Uno, Last Man on Earth"] 11 pp.
Dewey Drip (Bernard Dibble) 1 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Salteen's Art Gallery"] (Cole) 8 pp.
"A Solvent Solution" (Plastic Man text story) 1 pp.
Slaphappy Pappy (Cole) 1 pp.
" Plastic Man Products" (Cole/Spranger?) 10 pp.

18 July 1949

Cover: Plastic Man, Woozy and goat (Jack Cole)
["Down on the Farm"] (Cole) 12 pp.
Dewey Drip (Dibble) 1 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Hot Dog Caper"] (Cole) 5 pp.
Slaphappy Pappy (Cole) 1 pp.
"Accept No Substitute " (Plastic Man text story) 1 pp.
["Z. Newgate Popskull"] (Cole) 11 pp.

19 Sept. 1949

Cover: Woozy, caveman and Plastic Man-as-dinosaur (Jack Cole)
["The Prehistoric Plunderer"] (Cole) 13 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Fortune Teller"] (Cole) 5 pp.

Dewey Drip (Dibble) 1 pp.
"Harp of Justice" (Plastic Man text story) 1 pp.
["Murder in the Ring"] (Cole) 11 pp.

20 Nov. 1949

Cover: Plastic Man-as-rain-gutter, Woozy, Chief Branner and Sadly-Sadly (Jack Cole)
["Sadly-Sadly"] (Cole) 13 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Is Yours a Captivating Personality?"] (Cole) 6 pp.
"Mr. Blobb Goes to Town" (Plastic Man text story) 1 pp.
Come to the Oriental Quarter" (Cole) 11 pp.

21 Jan. 1950

Cover: Plastic Man, Kra Vashnu and Woozy in Crystal ball (Jack Cole)
["Kra Vashnu"] (Cole) 13 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Professor Putter's Potion"] (Cole) 6 pp.
Misunderstanding" (Plastic Man text story) 1 pp.
"Where Is Amorpho?" (Cole) 11 pp.

22 Mar. 1950

Cover: Woozy, Plastic Man and android Plastic Man (Jack Cole)
"Plague of Plastic People" (Cole) 13 pp.
Woozy Winks ["On Dopi Island"] (Cole) 6 pp.
"The Outlaw's Treasure" (Plastic Man text story) 1 pp.
"The City was Starving on a Full Stomach" (Cole) 11 pp.

23 May. 1950

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy in wheelchair at amusement park (Jack Cole)
["The Fountain of Age"] (Cole) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Tomorrow's Newspaper"] (Cole) 5 pp.
["Nevermore"] (Cole) 8 pp.
"Light Fingers" (text story) 1 pp.
["The Figure"] (Cole) 7 pp.

24 July 1950

Cover: Plastic Man, Shireena and Woozy with the Black Box of Terror
["The Black Box of Terror"] (Cole) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Woozy Gets Psychoanalyzed"] (Cole) 5 pp.
["Jezro Eben"] (Cole) 8 pp.
Three of a Kind" (text story) 1 pp.
The Alarming Case of the Dwindling Victuals" (Cole) 7 pp.

25 Sept. 1950

Cover: Plastic Man, Woozy and Angus McWhangus in front of police station (Jack Cole)
"Hoot Mon" (Cole) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks "Life Story of Woozy Winks" (Cole) 5 pp.
The Magic Cup" (Cole) 8 pp.
A Lesson Well Learned" (text) 1 pp.
["The Menace of Mr. Aqua"] (Cole) 7 pp.

26 Nov. 1950

Cover: Woozy watching Plastic Man loot jewelry store window (Jack Cole)
["The Second Plastic Man"] (Cole) 12 pp.
["Rug the Caveman"] (Cole) 11 pp.
["The Kingdom of Oldstown"] (Cole) 9 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Bladdo the Hypnotist"] (Cole) 5 pp.
"The Dumb Trick" (text story) 2 pp.
["The Vengeance of Doctor Cadu"] (Cole) 8 pp.

27 Jan. 1951

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy fighting hoods and Leader in Washington, D.C.
"The Sorceror's Cauldron" 12 pp.
"Follow the Leader" (Spranger/Kotzky?) 11 pp.
["Hypno the Great"] 9 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Darteir's Detective School"] 5 pp.
"Rock-A-Bye Roughneck" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
["The Great Gat Gatsby"] 8 pp.

28 Mar. 1951

Cover. Shasta, Plastic Man stretched over lifeboat on ship, Woozy captured by thugs
["The Sultry Shasta"] 12 pp.
"The Case of the Vanishing Windows" 10 pp.
"The Monster of Llendwymorra" 9 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Woozy Winks, Baby-Sitter"] 5 pp.
Tenderfoot" (text story) 1 pp.
"The Dwindling Water Supply" 8 pp.

29 May 1951

Cover: Woozy watching Tricky Toledo stretching Plastic Man over cactus
"The Attempted Return of Tricky Toledo" 12 p.
"The Tennessee Smugglers" 10 pp.
["The Wall Street Bandits"] 9 pp.
Woozy Winks ["To Lose or Not to Lose] (Kotzky?) 5 pp.
The Body in the Creek" (text story) 2 pp.
["The Car-Snatching Ring"] 8 pp.

30 July 1951

Cover: Plastic Man, Woozy and cop vs. thugs in armored car
The Man Who Broke the Law of Gravity" (LeBlanc?) 12 pp.
Dazzla, Daughter of Darkness" 10 pp.
Captain Billions' Billions" (Kotzky?) 9 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Flea Circus"] (LeBlanc?) 5 pp.
"The Bon Voyage Smuggler" (text) 2 pp.
["Grandma Crookes"] (Kotzky?) 8 pp.

31 Sept. 1951

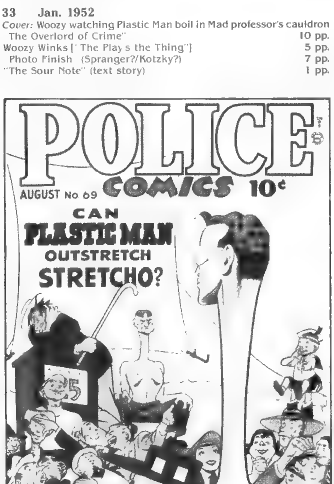
Cover. Plastic Man and Woozy vs. gorillas and Raka
["General Disorder"] 12 pp.
["Professor McBeast"] 10 pp.
The Rituals of Raka" (Kotzky?) 9 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Woozy Falls in Love"] 5 pp.
"Death Watch" (text) 2 pp.
Reflecto, the Astounding Mirror Man" (LeBlanc/Kotzky?) 8 pp.

32 Nov. 1951

Cover: Plastic Man, Chief Branner and Woozy vs. Mister Fission
"The Man Below Zero" (Fox?) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["At the Circus"] 5 pp.
["The Menace of Mr. Fission"] (LeBlanc?/Spranger?) 8 pp.
"Jungle God" (text story) 1 pp.
"The Hollow Heels" 7 pp.

33 Jan. 1952

Cover: Woozy watching Plastic Man boil in Mad professor's cauldron
"The Overlord of Crime" 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Play's the Thing"] 5 pp.
Photo Finish (Spranger?/Kotzky?) 7 pp.
"The Sour Note" (text story) 1 pp.



["The Kid Kidnappers"] 7 pp.

34 Mar. 1952

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy in smuggler's hand
["Smuggler's Haven"] 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Skating Contest"] 4 pp
["Wolf Men"] 7 pp
"The Ill Wind" (text) 1 pp
["The Army Saboteurs"] 7 pp.

35 May 1952

Cover: The Hypnotist hypnotizing Plastic Man
["The Porcupine"] 11 pp
Woozy Winks ["The Fire Extinguisher Formula"] 4 pp
"The Eyes Have It" 7 pp.
"The Coroner's Clue" (text story) 1 pp
["The Deadly Dr. Quomquat"] 7 pp.

36 July 1952

Cover: Plastic Man with shark, Woozy Winks with clam
"The Uranium Underground" 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["A Date Deflected"] 4 pp
["The Malicious Magician"] 7 pp.
"The Perfect Murder" (text) 1 pp.
"The Invisible Invaders 7 pp.

37 Sept. 1952

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy vs. giant ants
Giant Ants" 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Lifeguard"] (Kotzky?) 4 pp.
["The Border Bandits"] 7 pp
"The Hunch (text story) 1 pp
["At the Center of the Earth"] 7 pp.

38 Nov. 1952

Cover: Plastic Man, Woozy and the ghost of Monk Mauley
"The Fight Against Germ Warfare 10 pp
Woozy Winks ["Willie Woe"] 4 pp.
"The Curse of Monk Mauley" 7 pp.
"By-Line on Suspense" (text) 1 pp
"Wrath of the Wig" 7 pp.

39 Jan. 1953

Cover: Plastic Man and faces of madness
"The Stairway to Madness"
Woozy Winks ["Ghosts Down on the Farm"] 5 pp.
"In the Fourth Dimension 7 pp.
"Suspicion of Murder (text story) 1 pp.
"The Hounds of Horror" 7 pp.

40 Mar. 1953

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy Winks vs. Ghoul of Ghost Swamp
Maker of Monsters" 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Reducing Parlor"] (Kotzky?) 4 pp.
"Ghoul of Ghost Swamp 7 pp.
Trap Trappers" (Plastic Man text story) 2 pp.
Yesterday's Murders (LeBlanc?) 7 pp.

41 May 1953

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy Winks vs. dragon (Reed Crandall?)
Beast with the Bloody Claws" (Rockwell?/Cuidera?) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks "The Human Cannonball 4 pp.
"The Bounding Bandit" (Nicholas?/Cuidera?) 7 pp.
"Murder Was a Back Seat Driver" (text story) 1 pp.
"The Red Wreckers or Rangistan" 7 pp.

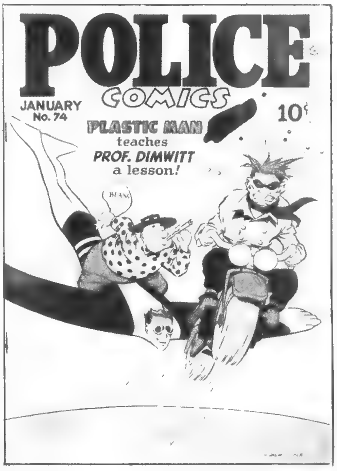
42 July 1953

Cover: King of Thunderbolts blasting Plastic Man and Woozy
"The Witch of Wailing Woods" (Kotzky?/Cuidera?) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Dancin' Fool"] (Fox) 4 pp.
"The King of Thunderbolts" (Spranger?) 7 pp.
"Incident in a Storm" (text story) 1 pp.
"The Little Man Who Wasn't There" 7 pp

43 Nov. 1953

Cover: Plastic Man saving Woozy from vampire
"The Evil Terror" (Al Luster?) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Scientific Detective"] (Fox?) 4 pp.
"The Monster of Flame" (Luster?) 7 pp.
"The Sealed Room" (Plastic Man text story) 1 pp.
"The Death Trap" (Luster?) 7 pp.

44 Jan. 1954



Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy cupping crooks (Chuck Cuidera?)
"The Magic Cup" (from *Plastic Man* #25)
Woozy Winks ["Woozy Gets Psychoanalyzed"] (from *Plastic Man* #24)
"A Lesson Well Learned" (text story from *Plastic Man* #25)
["Jezro Eben"] (from *Plastic Man* #24)
["The Menace of Mister Aqua"] (from *Plastic Man* #25)

45 Mar. 1954

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy vs. invaders from Saturn (Chuck Cuidera?)
"The Inhuman Brute" (Fox?) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Cash Conquers All"] 4 pp.
["Lotus Lantern"] (Dillin?/Cuidera?) 7 pp.
"Tottering Genius" (Plastic Man text story from *Police Comics* #1)
"The Invisible Invaders" (from *Plastic Man* #36)

46 May 1954

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy vs. The Spider (Chuck Cuidera?)
"Plastic Man Meets the Spider" (Fox?) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Skating Contest"] (from *Plastic Man* #34)
"Reflecto, the Astounding Mirror Man" (from *Plastic Man* #31)
"Murder Was a Back Seat Driver" (text story from *Plastic Man* #41)
"The Case of the Dwindling Victuals" (from *Plastic Man* #24)

47 July 1954

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy vs. The Fiend (Chuck Cuidera?)
"The Fiend of the Thousand Faces" (Nicholas?) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Flea Circus"] (from *Plastic Man* #30)
"Captain Billions' Billions" (from *Plastic Man* #30)
"Incident In a Storm" (text story from *Plastic Man* #42)
["Grandma Crookes"] (from *Plastic Man* #30)

48 Sept. 1954

Cover: Plastic Man underwater, fighting shark and Killer Crossbones (Chuck Cuidera?)
"Killer Crossbones" (Nicholas?) 10 pp.
Woozy ["Quest for Lorraine"] (LeBlanc?) 4 pp.
["The Menace of Mr. Fission"] (from *Plastic Man* #32)
"The Perfect Plan" (text story) 1 pp.
["The Border Bandits"] (from *Plastic Man* #37)

50 Dec. 1954

Cover: Iron Fist vs. Plastic Man and Woozy on cable car (Chuck Cuidera?)
"Trio of Tyranny" (Nicholas?) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Woozy Winks, Baby-Sitter"] (from *Plastic Man* #28)
["The Great Gat Gatsby"] (from *Plastic Man* #27)
"The Dumb Ones" (text) 1 pp.
"The Monster of Llendwymorra" (from *Plastic Man* #28)

51 Jan. 1955

Cover: Plastic Man, Woozy carrying shell casings, sleeping soldiers and Sandman (Charles Nicholas)
"The Incredible Sleep Weapon" (Nicholas) 9 pp.
Woozy Winks ["To Lost or Not to Lose"] (from *Plastic Man* #29)
"The Tennessee Smugglers" (from *Plastic Man* #29)
"Three of a Kind" (text story) 1 pp.
"The Forces of Evil" (originally ["The Car-Snatching Ring"]) (from *Plastic Man* #29)

52 Feb. 1955

Cover: Wizard and Woozy riding Plastic Man-as-kite
"The Indestructible Wizard" (Nicholas) 10 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Fire Extinguisher Formula"] (from *Plastic Man* #35)
["The Eyes Have It"] (from *Plastic Man* #35)
"Dollars For Doughnuts" (text story) 1 pp.
"The Ritual of Raka" (from *Plastic Man* #31)

53 Apr. 1955

Cover: Dazzla and Herko vs. Plastic Man and Woozy at castle (Charles Nicholas)
"The Attempted Return of Tricky Toledo" (from *Plastic Man* #29)
"The Perfect Double-Cross (text story) 1 pp.
Smart Alex (Dibble?) 1 pp.
Woozy Winks ["The Play's the Thing"] (from *Plastic Man* #33)
"Dazzla, Daughter of Darkness" (from *Plastic Man* #30)

54 June 1955

Cover: Dr. Quomquat and his robot vs. Plastic Man and Woozy
["Smuggler's Haven"] (from *Plastic Man* #34)
Woozy Winks ["At the Circus"] (from *Plastic Man* #32)
["Wolf Men"] (from *Plastic Man* #34)
"Midge the Mighty" (text story) 1 pp.
["The Deadly Dr. Quomquat"] (from *Plastic Man* #35)

55 Oct. 1955

Cover: Woozy, Plastic Man, guards and Ice Man in museum
"The Man Below Zero" (from *Plastic Man* #32)
Woozy Winks ["The Lifeguard"] (from *Plastic Man* #37)
["At the Center of the Earth"] (from *Plastic Man* #37)
"Light Fingers" (text story from *Plastic Man* #23)
"Yesterday's Murders" (from *Plastic Man* #40)

56 Nov. 1955

Cover: Plastic Man holding on to Weightless Wiggins (Charles Nicholas?)
"The Man Who Broke the Law of Gravity" (from *Plastic Man* #30)
Woozy Winks "Life Story of Woozy Winks" (from *Plastic Man* #25)
"Plague of Plastic People" (from *Plastic Man* #22)
"Light Fingers" (text story from *Plastic Man* #23)

57 Dec. 1955

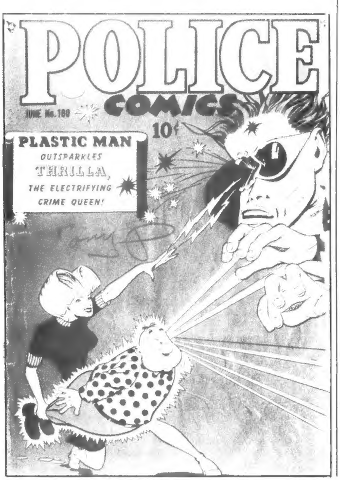
Cover: Plastic Man, Woozy Winks, Winthrop Snavely with cauldron (Charles Nicholas)
"The Chemist's Cauldron" (formerly "The Sorcerer's Cauldron") (from *Plastic Man* #27)
Woozy Winks ["Willie Woe"] (from *Plastic Man* #38)
"Photo Finish" (from *Plastic Man* #33)
"The Obvious Clue" (formerly "The Coroner's Clue") (text story from *Plastic Man* #35)
["The Army Saboteurs"] (from *Plastic Man* #34)

58 Jan. 1956

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy, android Plastic Man, Bunyan O'Banyon and Doc Bumble in laboratory
"The Overlord of Crime" (from *Plastic Man* #33)
"Wildfire" (text story) 1 pp.
Woozy Winks ["Tomorrow's Newspaper"] (from *Plastic Man* #22)
["The Second Plastic Man"] (from *Plastic Man* #26)

59 Feb. 1956

Cover: Leader and Gigi lifting secret file as Plastic Man watches



(Charles Nicholas)
"The Super Spy" (formerly "Follow the Leader")
(from *Plastic Man* #27)
Woozy Winks ["On Dopi Island"] (from *Plastic Man* #21)
"The Trap" (text story) 1 pp.
["The Porcupine"] (from *Plastic Man* #35)

60 Mar. 1956

Cover: Woozy and Plastic Man holding on to MIG jet (Dick Dillin?)
"The Man With the Fiery Disguise" (formerly "The Monster of Flame")
(from *Plastic Man* #43)
Woozy Winks "Big Top" (Dibble?) 1 pp.
"The Bounding Bandit" (from *Plastic Man* #41)
Woozy Winks ["Dancin' Fool"] (from *Plastic Man* #42)
"A Trap for Rustlers" (text story) 1 pp.
"Hypno, Master of Mystery" (formerly "Hypno the Great")
(from *Plastic Man* #27)

61 Jan. 1956

Cover: Professor Sparks vs. Plastic Man and Woozy (Dick Dillin?)
"The King of Thunderbolts" (from *Plastic Man* #42)
"The Hounds of Halkey" (formerly "The Hounds of Horror") (from *Plastic Man* #39)
"Wrong Signature" (text story) 1 pp.
["The Kingdom of Oldstown"] (from *Plastic Man* #26)

62 May 1956

Cover: Plastic Man observing Woozy and two others put to sleep by sleep-smoke billboard (Dick Dillin?)
"Mystery Manor" (formerly ["Yesterday's Yore"])
(from *Police Comics* #98)
Windy Breeze 1 pp.
Jonesy (Dibble) 1 pp.
"Trap for Trappers" (Plastic Man text story from *Police Comics* #102)
"The Smoke Weapon" (formerly ["The Wall Street Bandits"]) (from *Plastic Man* #29)
Woozy Winks "The Ski's the Limit" 5 pp.
Big Top (Dibble?) 1 pp.

63 July 1956

Cover: Plastic Man and Woozy running across rooftops from Reflecto (Dick Dillin?)
["The Menace of Mr. Aqua"] (from *Plastic Man* #25)
Lala Palooza (Dibble?) 1 pp.
Dicky (Dibble?) 1 pp.
"The Alarming Case of the Dwindling Victuals (from *Plastic Man* #24)
Woozy Winks ["The Flea Circus"] (from *Plastic Man* #30)
"Tottering Genuis" (Plastic Man text story from *Police Comics* #101)
Lala Palooza (Dibble?) 1 pp.
"Reflecto, the Astounding Mirror Man" (from *Plastic Man* #31)

64 Nov. 1956

Cover: Plastic Man vs. Saturnians and rockets (Dick Dillin?)
"The Expander Device" (formerly ["Jezro Eben"])
(from *Plastic Man* #24)
"The Invisible Invaders" (from *Plastic Man* #36)
Woozy Winks ["The Skating Contest"] (from *Plastic Man* #34)
"Those Big Blue Eyes" (text story) 1 pp.
"The Magic Cup" (from *Plastic Man* #25)
Jonesy (Dibble) 1 pp.

HIT COMICS

32 Summer 1944

Cover: Kid Eternity and Mr. Keeper
Kid Eternity ["The Battle for Excalibur"] 15 pp.
NOTE: Kid Eternity summons Plastic Man as a guest-star in this story.

PART II: Plastic Man reprints

Flashback #11, Dynapubs
Reprints all of *Plastic Man* #1 photographically.

Comic Reprints, Oklahoma
Reprints all of *Plastic Man* #2 photographically.

Detective Comics #441, June-July 1974
Reprints ["The Killing of Snoopy Hawks"]) from *Plastic Man* #3.

Plastic Man #11, 1964 (IW/Super)
Reprints ["Gazelle Van Gonder"], ["Say It Ain't So, Plas!"] and ["The Tomb of Tut-Da-Mutt"], all from *Plastic Man* #16.

Plastic Man #16, 1964 (IW/Super)
Reprints ["Kra Vashnu"], "Where Is Amorpho?" and ["Professor Putter's Potion"], all from *Plastic Man* #21.

Plastic Man #18, 1964 (IW/Super)
Reprints "Wanted Dead, Not Alive: Plastic Man" from *Police Comics* #95.

DC Special #15, Nov.-Dec. 1971
Reprints ["The Origin of Plastic Man"] from *Police Comics* #1, "Presenting the Man Who Can't Be Harmed" from *Police Comics* #13, "Plastic Man Products" from *Plastic Man* #17, "The Magic Cup" from *Plastic Man* #25, and ["Dartier's Detective School"] from *Plastic Man* #27.

Jimmy Olsen #149, May 1972
Reprints "The Case of Ancient Clues" from *Police Comics* #75.

Jimmy Olsen #150, June 1972
Reprints ["Sadly-Sadly"] from *Plastic Man* #20.

The Great Comic Book Heroes, Jules Feiffer (1965)
Reprints ["The Origin of Plastic Man"] from *Police Comics* #1.

Comic Reprints, Oklahoma
Reprints ["The Origin of Plastic Man"] and the rest of *Police Comics* #1 photographically.

Secret Origins of the Super DC Heroes, ed. by Denny O'Neil (1976)
Reprints ["The Origin of Plastic Man"] from *Police Comics* #1.

A Smithsonian Book of Comic-Book Comics, Barrier, Thompson, eds., 1981
Reprints ["The Origin of Plastic Man"] from *Police Comics* #1 and "Presenting the Man Who Can't Be Harmed" from *Police Comics* #13.

Batman #238, Jan. 1972
Reprints "Oh, Plastic Man!" from *Police Comics* 14.

Comix: A History of Comic Books in America, by Les Daniels (1971)
Reprints "The Granite Lady" from *Police Comics* #51 *photographically.*

PART III: DC Comics appearances

After Quality Comics went out of business in 1957, DC Comics (then National Periodical Publications) picked up the rights to most of their properties. Plastic Man wasn't revived as a character until 1966. (The first revival appearance of the character proper—if you want to call it that—was in *Plastic Man* #1, Nov.-Dec. 1966 since Plas's appearance in *House of Mystery* #160 is only as an identity-form for Robby Reed in *Dial H for Hero*.) Plastic Man's appearances in the Silver Age have been scattered and spotty. These are his appearances in DC Comics as of May, 1985:

Adventure Comics #467-478, 498, 499, 501-503 (498 on are reprints)
All-Star Squadron #1-3, 7, 14, 31, 32, 35-38
America Vs. the Justice Society #1, 2
Brave and Bold #76, 95, 123, 148
Crisis on Infinite Earths #5
DC Comics Presents #39, 50
House of Mystery #160
Inferior Five #2
Justice League of America #107, 144, 193
Plastic Man #1-20
Super Friends #36, 43, 45
World's Finest Comics #273

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Before *Steve Canyon*, before *Terry and the Pirates*, there was *Dickie Dare*, the first adventure strip created by master Milton Caniff. This volume reprints all of Caniff's *Dickie Dare* strips, with a foreword by Richard Marschall. *Also available in hardcover*. ($12.95)

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Released in an oversized 11" x 15" format, *The Complete E.C. Segar Popeye* reprints the entirety of the ten years of Segar's work on the *Thimble Theatre* strip, stretching from 1929 to Segar's death in 1938. With forewords and bibliographical data. *Also available in hardcover*. ($14.95)

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The amazing *Plastic Man* artist is featured in a biography by Ron Goulart. Plus: a complete checklist of his *Plastic Man* work. ($5.95)

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An American classic—the ferociously violent and action-packed secret agent saga created and drawn by Gil Kane (one of the summits of his career). *Annotated, with a Kane interview*. *MATURE*. ($2.50)

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A solo comic by Carol Lay, featuring Miss Lonelyhearts (Monica Saunders) as she faces the problems of love-lorn yuppies and does a little investigative reporting on the side. *MATURE*. ($2.00)

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LOVE AND ROCKETS

The comic book for the '80s! Los Bros. Hernandez' eclectic *Love and Rockets* is a rousing and affecting collection of tales at the crossroads of punk and science fiction, Archie Comics and *Zap!* comics, romance and rock 'n' roll. With "Mechanics," "Heartbreak Soup," "Rocky and Fumble," and "Errata Stigmata." *MATURE*. ($2.25)

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